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39.

975.

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SERMONS

BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN SCOTT, D.D.,

MINISTER OF THE NEW CHURCH, GREENOCK;

WITH

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

CONSOLATORY LETTERS, &c.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

JAMES BARR, D.D., PORT-GLASGOW.

EDINBURGH:
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PREFACE.

I CONSIDER it a privilege to be instrumental in bringing this volume of Discourses before the public. Their Author was long known and very highly esteemed in the west of Scotland, as a most faithful and successful minister of the Gospel of Christ. He committed nothing to the press except two or three Addresses to the young, which were printed for local distribution.

The Sermons which compose this volume were all prepared in the ordinary course of ministerial duty, without any view whatever to publication, and of course exhibit, in some degree, the imperfections that attach to all posthumous publications which the author himself has not prepared for the press. A very general desire was expressed, not only by the members of the flock over which he had long watched, but by many others who had been edified by his pulpit ministrations, to have some permanent memorial of one to whom they had often listened with interest and with profit; and it was to gratify this desire that the present volume has been prepared.

Dr Scott was possessed in an eminent degree of almost all those qualifications which render a minister of the Gospel a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,—excellent talents,—extensive information,—very high attainments in personal holiness,—a thorough knowledge of the Word of God,—sound and comprehensive views of Christian doctrine,—great practical acquaintance with the effects of the truth on the minds of men of different characters and in different circumstances, and much Christian wisdom in rightly dividing the word of truth, so as to make it bear most directly and successfully upon the minds of those whom he addressed.

I had not the happiness of knowing him until after he had been laid aside from the discharge of public duty, but it was my privilege for several years to act as his assistant, and to minister among his flock; and I can truly say of him, as Burnet did of Leighton, that "I have the greatest veneration for his memory, and that I reckon my knowledge of him among the greatest blessings of my life, and for which I know I must give an account to God in the great day." I had an opportunity of witnessing, and think it proper to bear testimony to, his singular freedom from those feelings, which, even among good men, sometimes disturb the cordial and affectionate harmony that ought to subsist between an aged pastor and his assistant and successor, his profound and lively interest in the spiritual welfare of his flock, manifested in every way that was practicable, and especially in habitual prayer that the blessing of God might rest upon

them, and his holy and magnanimous disregard of every thing but what might tend most to promote the glory of God in the salvation of their souls. From peculiar circumstances, he was placed in a situation in which he was called upon, after he had been laid aside from public duty, to choose between securing what he reckoned a pure dispensation of Christian truth to his flock, and the accomplishment of an object which must have been dear to his strongest natural affections, and he never hesitated which side to choose. He continued, while he lived, to act firmly and conscientiously, under the conviction that he was bound to have for his first object the spiritual welfare of the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made him overseer, whatever sacrifices this might require at his hand.

He had been subjected in the holy providence of God to a series of severe and painful afflictions, but these were certainly sanctified both to him and to his flock. He endured much hardship, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, and in this way was eminently qualified for doing the whole work of an Evangelist, and making full proof of his ministry, and especially for binding up the broken hearted, and comforting the mourners in Zion. In the very close of his life he was subjected, in consequence of divisions in his congregation, to a species of trial from which he had been previously exempted, as if his heavenly Master saw that he still needed something to wean him wholly from the world, to make him cease entirely from man whose breath is in his nostrils, and to commit himself and all his concerns unreservedly to Him

who judgeth righteously. This painful trial he bore with his usual resignation and magnanimity, and no doubt experienced its sanctifying influence in preparing him fully for the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

From my ministerial connexion with those among whom he had long laboured, I can bear ample testimony to the success of his exertions in converting sinners, and in edifying the body of Christ; and especially in impressing the minds of the young, and in guiding the views and comforting the hearts of those who were labouring under the pressure of temporal or spiritual distress.

The Discourses contained in this volume are, I think, eminently fitted to be useful, especially to those who have been awakened to some sense of the importance of religion, but who have not yet formed clear and distinct views of the leading doctrines of the Gospel, and are involved in difficulties and anxiety about their spiritual condition; and to those more advanced in the Christian life, who, amid the temptations and perplexities of the world, are desirous to walk circumspectly and in wisdom, and to adorn the doctrine of their God and Saviour in all things by a life and conversation becoming the Gospel.

The Rev. Dr Barr of Port-Glasgow has kindly furnished a Memoir of Dr Scott's life and professional character; while his son has given a short sketch of his father as he appeared in his private and domestic relations.

It may be added to the facts recorded in the Memoir, that in 1803 the University of Glasgow unanimously conferred

upon him the degree of Doctor in Divinity; that he died upon the 26th March 1836; and that an excellent sermon, preached in the New Church of Greenock, on the Sabbath after his funeral, by the Rev. Mr Smith of Lochwinnoch, a friend whom Dr Scott greatly valued, was soon after published.

In an APPENDIX will be found a biographical notice of DR LOVE of Anderston, with whom Dr Scott lived many years in terms of intimate friendship, originally intended for newspapers, and several letters addressed to Christian friends who had been visited with painful bereavements.

WM. CUNNINGHAM.

EDINBURGH, *March* 1839.

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thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank..... Page 182

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MEMOIR

OF

THE REV. DR SCOTT.

FEW characters could more honourably bear, or would more profitably reward, a minute inspection than that of the late DR SCOTT of Greenock. His extensive correspondence and the record of his every-day experience and observation would supply ample materials for a separate volume. The writer of this notice has not had access to either of these sources of information; nor would it be consistent with his prescribed limits to give the detailed history of a long and active life, which embraced a wide sphere, and extended over an eventful period. But even a brief outline cannot fail to be useful, and seems to be called for as an appropriate introduction to the following Discourses.

The Rev. Dr John Scott was born in the year 1765 in the parish of Logierait, Perthshire. Soon afterwards his father's family removed to the parish of Kippen, in the neighbourhood of which he received the rudiments of his education first at the school of Port of Menteith, and subsequently at that of Aberfoyle. At an early age he com-

menced his academical studies in the University of Glasgow, where he pursued, if not a brilliant yet an honourable career, discovering that ardent desire of knowledge, and exercising that patient industry in the cultivation of it which characterized his maturer years. By an unwearied application to the various departments of biblical literature, he laid the foundation of those attainments in theology which eminently fitted for the sacred profession he had chosen. When at college, he contracted habits of affectionate intimacy with a number of young men, whose principles and views coincided with his own, and who were destined to occupy important stations as fellow-labourers in the same vineyard with himself. Among his early and most valued friends may be mentioned the venerated names of Dr Balfour of Glasgow, Dr Campbell of Edinburgh, Dr Davidson of Dundee, and Dr Love of Anderston, a short memoir of whom, prefixed to his published Sermons, was written by Dr Scott.

In 1787 he was licensed to preach the gospel at the early age of twenty-two years. It does not appear that during the period which intervened between the dates of his license and ordination he held any stated engagement as a preacher. For some time he taught in the family of Colonel Graham of Rednock, father of the present General Graham Stirling; and also in that of Mr Wallace of Kelly, father to the present Member of Parliament for Greenock, which latter situation placed him in immediate contact with the scene of his future labours. The fact of his having been the means of saving the life of a boy whilst bathing was often mentioned by him as a circumstance which providentially brought him under the notice and recommended him to the good wishes of the inhabitants of Greenock, who enjoyed otherwise the most favourable opportunities of becoming acquainted with his character, and of appreciating his qualifications for the minis-

terial office. Accordingly, a vacancy having occurred in the New Church and parish of that town, he was, in compliance with the choice of the people, presented by the Magistrates and Council to that important charge, as successor to the Rev. Dr Adam. His ordination took place on the 14th of May 1793.

The connexion thus formed, and which terminated only with his life, was always viewed by him with feelings of peculiar sacredness and solemnity; and these feelings were reciprocated by the members of his numerous flock. No other individual, perhaps, could have been found whose talents and character were so admirably adapted to the place and the people. The same expressions of popular attachment which welcomed him at the commencement of his work attended him to its close; and the experience of every successive year, by presenting to the subjects of his ministry additional evidence of his zeal and ability, his faithfulness and success, served only to give him a higher place in their affections, and a firmer hold of their confidence and esteem.

In the year 1796, he married Susan Fisher, daughter of Alexander Fisher, Esq. Dychmont, East Kilbride, a lady well fitted to be his associate by the vigour of a well-cultivated understanding, and the fervour of an enlightened and elevated piety. Their family consisted of seven children, two of whom died in infancy; other two were prematurely carried off at the ages of eight and fourteen years respectively, both of them endeared to their parents, not so much by the amiable dispositions which they discovered, as by the strong and decided marks of early piety which they exhibited. A very painful trial befell them in the person of their eldest son, a youth of great promise, who, after a season of acute and protracted suffering, in which it was found necessary to amputate the diseased limb, died in 1811, at the age of (I think) eighteen years. Mrs Scott herself was long in very

delicate health; and for several years before her death in 1829 had to sustain a heavy complication of trouble, which she bore with the most exemplary meekness and resignation. Two of the children, a son and daughter, still survive.

The public life of Dr Scott furnishes few memorable incidents. He occupied a conspicuous and important sphere, and exercised a powerful and extensive influence; but he confined himself to his appropriate work, and laboured from year to year in the zealous yet unobtrusive discharge of his spiritual duties. He was a regular attendant on the church courts, felt a deep and conscientious interest in all their proceedings, and made himself thoroughly master of every question of importance that came before them; but he did not in general take a very prominent part in their debates, although he never spoke on any subject without being listened to with the most profound respect and attention. Neither did he come before the public in the capacity of an author, with the exception of two excellent and affectionate addresses which he permitted to be printed for the benefit of the young in his congregation. The scene of his parochial labours, however, afforded ample scope for the exercise of all his energies, and there he was enabled to exhibit a display of talent and character which secured for him a high place in public estimation, and associates his name with those of the most able and useful ministers of whom our church can boast.

The high and well-merited reputation of Dr Scott was built chiefly on the solid basis of personal religion. The doctrines of evangelical truth, which he faithfully preached, eloquently illustrated, and powerfully enforced, were the daily food of his own soul. The work of the Holy Spirit, on which he loved to expatiate, was with him a matter of actual experience. He scrupulously adhered to the same lofty standard of morality which he laid down for the

guidance of his people. His character embodied a fine exemplification of the power of godliness in the exercise of a piety at once humble and elevated, pure and practical, cheerful and charitable. He habitually lived, and moved, and breathed in the element of God's awful and gracious presence. Yet his religion had nothing morose or repulsive in it. He mingled much with society. No man was happier or could be more agreeable than he in the company of his friends. He possessed a large fund of humour; and his conversation was not more instructive by its wisdom than amusing by its pungency and its playfulness. But his intercourse with men was uniformily such as to indicate that he spent much of his time in communion with God. In him were happily blended the grave divine with the delightful companion; and his presence never failed to inspire love for the man, and reverence for the minister.

The piety of Dr Scott was rational as well as fervent. It was the piety of an enlightened, well-balanced, and highly-cultivated mind. His natural talents, which were of a superior order, had been improved by the most assiduous application. He possessed a minute and accurate acquaintance with the literature of his profession, acquired by a careful examination of the Sacred Writings in the original tongues, and by an attentive perusal of the most esteemed theological works, both ancient and modern. He was, besides, more or less conversant with almost every department of general literature; and his stores of knowledge, extensive and varied as they were, had been so carefully digested, and so judiciously arranged, and were so distinctly remembered, as to be always at his command, and always available for materials of interesting conversation and subjects of useful instruction.

Nowhere did he appear to greater advantage, or employ his talents with happier effect, than in the intercourse of

private life. Endued with a retentive memory and a lively imagination, possessing a large fund of information and anecdote, uniting an acute and delicate sense of propriety, with great affability of manner, cheerfulness of temper, and warmth of affection, his conversation was at once attractive and useful to every variety of company and character.

As a preacher, Dr Scott stood very high in public esteem. He possessed a rare combination of many of those qualities which are most essential to a popular preacher. To a commanding figure, a clear and melodious voice, a distinct and animated utterance, he added a plain and pointed style of composition, a simple and natural arrangement of his subject, close and pertinent illustration, a fervent and impressive delivery. His discourses were both instructive and argumentative, full and faithful in the exhibition of divine truth, searching and powerful in their appeals to the heart and conscience; above all they were experimental and practical. The charms of his address, backed by the weight of his character, never failed to arrest attention; and he found a reward of his laborious preparations for the pulpit, not so much in the expression of popular acceptance, which were constantly presented to him, as in the instances of deep and serious impression which came under his observation, and by which he was encouraged to entertain the hope of having many seals of his ministry for a crown of rejoicing to him in the day of the Lord.

His mind was habitually impressed with a deep sense of pastoral responsibility. The ministrations of the sanctuary formed a part only, and the least considerable part, of the work to which he was devoted. By the intercourse of private visitation, which brought him into contact with the families and individuals of his charge, by the exercise of a minute and vigilant superintendence over them, by the expression of a tender and conscientious solicitude for their

welfare, he both acquired an intimate knowledge of their characters, and established a firm hold on their affections. He evinced a strong partiality for young people, and felt great pleasure in contributing to their improvement and gratification. The youth of his own flock, in particular, found in him not only the kindness of a faithful friend, but the care of an anxious father, who travailed in birth until Christ should be formed in them.

The spiritual interests of his people lay very near his heart; he bore all classes of them constantly in his remembrance at a throne of grace, making mention of them daily in his prayers. In him they possessed both a counsellor to advise, and an intercessor to plead for them; the meanest of his flock had easy access to his person for direction or consolation; and they ever found with him an attentive ear, a sympathizing heart, and, when circumstances required it, a bountiful hand. As he rejoiced in their joys, so also he wept in their sorrows. The house of mourning was the object of his tenderest care, and the scene of his most welcome and successful ministrations. He had a word in season for every description of mourners; and in dispensing comfort, he combined the tenderness of a brother with the fidelity of a Christian minister.

He had been taught by severe and sanctified experience to commiserate the distresses of others. Affliction was long an inmate in his dwelling; and the furnace had been made seven times hotter to him than it is to the generality of men. But trials overwhelming to the feelings of nature were made supportable by the special influences of divine grace. To these painful trials the church is indebted for an example of patient and cheerful resignation, which is eminently worthy of being recorded as alike honouring to the God whom he served, and calculated to recommend the Saviour in whom he trusted. Their effect was not more beneficial on his per-

sonal character than on his public ministrations; and there is good reason to believe that the afflictions with which his heavenly Father thought fit to visit him, proved the means of working out not only for him, but through him for many of his people, "a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory." [For some additional remarks on this subject, the reader is referred to the subjoined letter from the pen of his son, who enjoyed the most favourable opportunities of observation, and whose testimony possesses very peculiar claims to attention.]

The ministry of Dr Scott, productive of so much good to others, necessarily secured a large share of influence for himself; but it was a legitimate and well-earned influence, resulting from a sense of his personal worth, a conviction of his ministerial fidelity, and gratitude for his invaluable services; and it was an influence from which he derived no other advantage than the pleasure of being more extensively useful. He was honoured in being the instrument of good to an extent far beyond his allotted sphere of congregational or parochial labour. The community at large reaped the fruit of his active and influential exertions in advocating the cause of public charity, and in promoting the success of every religious and beneficent institution. His occasional services to the church, and especially to those congregations among whom he was called to assist in the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, greatly enhanced his reputation, and were often attended with manifest tokens of the divine blessing in affording both to ministers and people seasons of sweet and profitable communion, "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

To those who enjoyed the privilege of his correspondence, his letters conveyed an accurate and edifying impression of his characteristic prudence and discernment, his tenderness and spirituality. They were remarkable for neatness of

execution; they breathed a spirit of kind and faithful friendship; they were highly valuable for the lessons of truth, the counsels of wisdom, and the subjects of consolation with which they abounded; and proved instrumental in many cases of trying emergency as the means of encouraging the fearful and confirming the doubtful, of quieting the troubled conscience and binding up the bleeding heart.

Though a zealous churchman, he was highly esteemed by Christians of all denominations, and cheerfully co-operated with them in every effort to advance the cause of our common Redeemer. He had a very extensive acquaintance among the ministers of the Establishment, and he lived with some of the most distinguished of them on terms of close and affectionate intimacy. He took a lively interest in the welfare of his younger brethren, to many of whom he rendered important services by his kind countenance and judicious counsels, and all of whom looked up to him with grateful confidence and profound veneration.

In the year 1829, the active ministry of Dr Scott was suddenly interrupted during his attendance on the General Assembly, by an attack of paralysis, from the effects of which he never recovered. For some years afterwards he was able occasionally to attend the church, and joined with his people in the celebration of our Lord's Supper; but he could take no part in the public services of the sanctuary. Still, however, he continued to address them in the impressive eloquence of a pure and pious conversation. Whilst the outward man was rapidly sinking into decay, the inward man was renewed day by day. He now in a remarkable degree experienced the comfort and exemplified the power of those precious truths which he had been honoured to preach. The cheerful confidence which he had maintained through life became firmer and more tranquillizing as he realized the approach of death. His last testimony was just

the expression of that humble resignation, and joyful hope, and ardent desire, which had been familiar to him in every previous stage of his religious history. But he now had a nearer and brighter view of the glory which awaited him. He now breathed more freely and sensibly the atmosphere of heaven, whilst he spake the language and anticipated the joy of its blessed inhabitants. He bore his last illness with a patient serenity, altogether worthy of his character; and at length, in the 71st year of his age, and the 41st of his ministry, he entered into rest, and obtained the consummation of his faith and hope in having administered to him "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

JAMES BARR.

It is but a very narrow province that can belong to me in contributing to a complete view of my father's character. From all critical estimate of what he was, such as would be expected from one less closely connected with him, I am of course precluded. The readers of the Memoir will expect rather to learn from me what sort of impression his life as head of a family left on those nearest to him; but here again I am limited by the unsuitableness for public expression of the most natural and the deepest feelings belonging to that relation, which alone entitles me to be heard on the subject. In that relation, the father is necessarily contemplated more than the individual; but it is with the distinguishing features of the individual that the public have to do.

The loss of three children within eight months, by illness gradual and protracted enough to afford scope for every fluctuation of hope and fear, left deep marks on his character as a man and as a father. An unreadiness to be moved by sources of slight and transient emotion, a sadness whose very consolations were solemn and deep, the sword still suspended in the lingering illness of her who had shared most largely in his bereavements, formed, in a man naturally grave and reserved, a habit which might seem like sternness to his surviving children, missing in him the cheerful parent of a little merry family. It was not gloom. He sorrowed not as those who have no hope. Towards us, as towards his flock and humanity in general, his feelings had gained in depth and tenderness, but not so as to promote facility of access; a sort of religious awe was at that early period the feeling which he most inspired at home.

This did not of course continue at the same height. In addition to the usual effects of time, a strenuous regularity in discharging his official duty, through a struggle which few indeed can appreciate, and a peculiar susceptibility of enjoyment from the society of his friends and from the objects of nature, contributed much to the restoration of the tone of his mind; while this progress into the capacity of sympathy diminished to his children the sense of distance from him, and incited him to greater openness of communication.

A certain mellowed cheerfulness and recovered mental freedom characterized the last fifteen years of his public life. He had left, in 1815, the house haunted with associations not the less depressing because they were so dear to him, and removed to a new one, in the building and preparation of which he took the pleasurable interest which pure and quiet-minded people take in the little revolutions of domestic life. The education of his children afforded, as it ad-

vanced, more exercise to his mind, and began to be a wholesome revival of the intellectual interests of his own youth. He now resorted, though very sparingly, to some literary relaxations. I may mention, as one instance, that he acquired at this time enough of Italian to read some of the best works in that language with perception and enjoyment of their merits.

But still his house was not unvisited by affliction. Acute and threatening disease in one or another member of his family, was no unfrequent inmate. This probably tended to preserve and to *send inward* those influences of his former sorrows which God saw too precious to be lost. In nothing were they more apparent than in the discharge of his pastoral duties. All who knew him in that capacity were aware of his special acceptance and usefulness in attending the beds of the sick, and in the instruction of the young of his congregation. His fitness for these offices was not cheaply purchased. I am thoroughly persuaded that the depth of paternal concern for the lambs of his flock which prompted his efforts on their behalf, and the tender sympathy with which he entered the chamber of mourning, belonged to him, not merely as a man, or a Christian, or a minister, but emphatically as the sorely bereaved father of children who died in the Lord.

This period from the recovery of his active vigour after his bereavements, to the attack of illness which set him aside from public duty, is the portion of his life of which I ought to be best able to speak, and to record whatever it presented that was striking or memorable. But, in truth, it was not in parts, in single acts, or single sayings that he was memorable or striking. A remarkable balance of mind, with the added influence of a caution and prudence, in which, if any where, the balance was exceeded, unfitted him to exhibit salient points of brilliancy either in thought or in

action. Indolent and restless observers were not to be expected to discern either the strength or the excellence of his character. He did not rouse their languid attention by occasional and disproportionate displays of any prominent faculty; he conscientiously strove to exercise all which, even naturally, existed in a harmony much more admirable than dazzling.

But, perhaps, I am straying into the biographer's province. The closing period of his life was ushered in by two events which gave it a colouring peculiar to itself. A paralytic stroke, which, although it had not the effect on the mental powers so often attending that disease, cut off from the first every expectation of returning to public life, was soon followed by the removal of the partaker in his parental affections and his parental sorrows. Of her I may less trust myself to speak than even of him. Few could know what he had found, and what he lost in her. The dissolving for earth of this union of thirty-four years was needful to give its intended weight to that desolation of the "outward man," in which it was judged fit that his closing days should be spent. He continued to reap the advantage of his established habits in a quiet regularity of employment, most conducive to mental health in such a bodily state. He experienced kindness from many friends, peculiar devotedness of affection from some, whom it would be pleasant here to name, if such were the fitting expression of his sense of their love. But, benumbed in his limbs, depressed in animal spirits, having but one member of his own family a constant resident under his roof, and that one suffering and enfeebled by illness like himself; he evidently felt the season to be given for humbling and melting, for settling his desires and his faith more exclusively on the treasure that is in heaven. He grew in gentleness, and meekness, and poverty of spirit. Among his last words, when he was aware

of no mortal auditor, were difficult but earnest utterances of his desires before God for his people, and their children, and for himself, of faith in the blood of Christ; and his last breath went forth in prayer.

A. J. SCOTT.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

Job xxxii. 7.—"I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom."

WISDOM is the right application of useful knowledge. In this discourse, it signifies true religion; which is the practical and saving knowledge of God revealed in the Scriptures. To know the living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, is the most useful knowledge, is life eternal. This, too, is "the wisdom that cometh from above, and is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." And it is the word of God only which is able to make men thus "wise unto salvation." This wisdom, including the sublimest knowledge, united with a corresponding temper and behaviour, must, according to the ordinary dispensation of grace, be acquired gradually by men, naturally alienated from God through the

ignorance that is in them, and cannot be acquired in the same degree by men who differ in opportunities, and in original capacity, as much as in stature and in features. But it is expected that the religious improvement of every man should be proportionate to his abilities, years, and opportunities. To the aged are we referred, as to sage commentators on the word and providence of God. And the laws and the customs of all nations enjoin reverence to those advanced in life, more particularly when they are persons of rank in the community. Hence, our grievous disappointment when age and distinction are not accompanied by a suitable measure of true wisdom. Hence, too, a painful alteration in our behaviour to those above us, in these respects, as soon as their deficiencies are discovered. If, on important occasions, we wait for solid instruction and exemplary conduct from them, and if they justly offend by many ill-founded assertions, equally at variance with true godliness and brotherly love, and by much unseemly behaviour, duty obligeth us to withdraw, in a respectful manner, not that outward deference we ever owe to age and station, but that confidence in their judgment, that homage of the heart, which belong to rank and years adorned with true wisdom. We pass by the aged but blasted thorn with an emotion compounded of respect and pity; we take shelter under the shady branches of the venerable oak, when we seek protection from the sun or the shower.

Of this expectation and disappointment, the passage containing the text furnishes a striking illustration. Long had Elihu waited for that display of true wisdom, in its most perfect form, for which the character, and years, and condition, of Job and his friends, taught him to look,—for which the interesting occasion of their meeting, and the important subject of their conversation, made a loud demand. His reasonable expectations were not answered. These respectable persons displayed much wisdom, it is true; but they also discovered very deplorable defects both of knowledge and of temper. This emboldened Elihu, notwithstanding his youth, to become the advocate of the integrity of Job, and of the rectitude of God. In the beginning of his discourse, he apologizeth for his attempt with modest intrepidity; and in the text, which forms part of his apology, he expresseth his grievous disappointment: "I said, days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom."

This expectation extendeth to every one of us; and if it be founded in reason and revelation, as it seems to be, our answering of it involves our happiness, as our disappointing of it does our misery. Are not we, therefore, deeply interested in this inquiry, what are the grounds of the expectation in the text, viz. that the religious improvement of every man should correspond to his abilities, years, and opportunities? The result of this inquiry will lead us to examine our own attainments, and should

excite us, either to redeem the time that is lost, or to double our diligence to "make our calling and election sure."

What are the grounds of the expectation expressed in the text, that the religious improvement of every man should correspond to his abilities, years, and opportunities? The will of God is the most solid foundation of any hope, and gives the hope thus founded the practical influence of a divine command. From the universality of this expectation, we may presume that it is authorized by the Sovereign of the universe. Of this we ought to have no doubt, as we find it sanctioned by the will of God manifested in our rational nature,—in the progress of our faculties and opportunities of improvement,—in the increase of our duties in number and difficulty,—and, especially, in the revealed scheme of salvation.

I. This expectation is founded in the intention of God manifested in our rational nature. The character of a creature discovers the end of its creation. What, then, is that property which clearly distinguisheth man from all the other inhabitants of the earth? Undeniably, his capacity of knowing and loving, of serving and enjoying God. And does not this angelic faculty point to the glory of God, and to our own happiness, to be promoted by the exercise of it, as our chief end? It does this so forcibly, that the serious consideration of the chief

end of man has disentangled the heart from the snares of the world, and constrained to devote it unto God. And as perfection in religion is not attained at once, it is self-evident that the glory of God, and our own happiness, oblige us equally to begin, and to make suitable progress in a religious course. Let us ask ourselves, therefore, " Are we renouncing or promoting the end of our creation? Are we prizing or contemning both the glory of God and our own interests? Are we humbly seconding, or perversely thwarting, the wise and gracious intentions of our Maker? Created erect, with a countenance elevated towards heaven, have we degraded ourselves to the level of the grovelling brute, or the crawling reptile, by looking continually downwards, by confining our views to earthly objects? Or, having obeyed the intimation of our Creator, are we habitually regarding the heavenly mansions as our home, and the favour of God as our true happiness? And are we pursuing every other object in subserviency to this our chief end and chief good?"

II. This expectation is founded on the intention of God, manifest in the progress of our rational faculties, and our opportunities of improvement. We have seen that God hath formed us for religion; I now remark, that he hath bestowed on us those two things which are indispensable to our improvement in it, growing abilities and increasing opportu-

nities. Our capacity for religion is the greatest glory of our nature. It gradually enlarges with the expansion of reason and the affections, in our progress from childhood to youth, and from manhood to old age. Nor are our opportunities of improving left behind by our advancing abilities. We are advanced from the nursery to the school, to the church, to the conversation of the experienced, to the mature instructions of them who being dead yet speak in their writings, and above all, to "the Scriptures, that are able to make us wise unto salvation." By the same good providence which invigorates our mental powers and multiplies their opportunities of improvement, we rise from the narrow vale of lowly condition which confined our views, to the diversified eminences of wealth and rank, which widely extend our prospects of God and his ways. On these eminences we may search out his works in the sunshine of prosperity, or with solemn admiration contemplate the night of adversity, spangled and cheered by the innumerable consolations of the Most High. Such is our growing capacity, and such our increasing opportunities of religious improvement, evidently conferred for the same purpose by our wise Creator, and gracious Preserver. Let us carefully and impartially inquire how we have used them.

To us the lines have fallen in pleasant places. What part of our favoured land is not visited by the Sun of Righteousness, is not watered by the spiritual dews of heaven? A few there are among

us, planted on the bleak side of the mountain, without the culture of early instruction, and chilled by the unkindly winds and rains of laborious penury. The glistening eye of divine compassion is on them. Charity, glowing with an active benevolence, strains every nerve to ameliorate their condition. God forbid that her pious endeavours should be defeated by the worldly spirit which hath gone forth, and is sowing the tares of ignorance and vice more profusely than even the seeds of promising lucrative enterprise! With regard to the majority, hath God so dealt with any people? But what return have we made for all our privileges? Have we acquired as much divine knowledge, and become as expert in the application of it, as we well might in our circumstances? Is our spiritual wisdom suitable to the pious care of parents and teachers, to the leisure for religious improvement, to the opportunities of Christian conversation, which we have enjoyed? Thus planted and watered, are we as the sandy and barren desert, or as the pleasant and fruitful garden of the Lord? Have our prospects of God and his ways become more extensive as we have risen in years, experience, and condition; and do we shut our eyes on them, or do we examine them merely for selfish ends? Is our strength augmented, and do we waste it in buffeting the blast or pursuing the rainbow? Does the Sun of Righteousness shine on us, and are we more ungrateful than the flower favourably situated, which daily discloseth

fairer beauties, which daily diffuseth a richer perfume?

III. This expectation is founded on the intention of God, manifest in the increasing number and difficulty of relative duties. The duties of man result from his relation to God and to his fellow men. By the appointment of God they are incessantly undergoing some change, and every alteration increaseth the difficulty, number, and complexity of his duties. The right discharge of them dependeth on the increasing knowledge of the will of God, on a corresponding conformity of temper, and on that ease in performing them, which is acquired by use, and perfected by habit. That portion of divine wisdom which is fit for the child or servant, will be very insufficient for the master, the spouse, or the parent. That degree of religious improvement, which is proportionate to the duties of the hearer of the gospel and the subject, will be very unequal to those of the magistrate and minister. And when our religion and duty do not advance hand in hand, we are men in stature, but children in science and behaviour; we are mariners without navigation; we are husbandmen without the knowledge of soil or season. What a melancholy prospect has that family or community where this is the case! What have they to expect but a famine of the bread of life,—but the shipwreck of the most valuable of their eternal interests?

And what may our connexions reasonably expect from us? Is our advancement to situations of higher trust and responsibility accompanied by a suitable progress in religion? As we rise from one period of life to another, and from one station to another, has our knowledge of what those changes require, has our sense of duty, has our pleasure in answering the growing demands of God, and has our usefulness in society, steadily kept pace with our outward advancement? Does our progress in them bear a just proportion to our attainments in what relates to time? Are we as well acquainted with the Bible, the word of God, as with books of human composition,—as experienced in the business of a religious as of a worldly life,—as well provided with the bread that endureth for ever, as with that which perisheth,—as capable of training up a family in the way they should go, as of furnishing them with the necessaries of their condition,—or as rich in treasures which cannot be taken away, as in those which cannot satisfy, and may soon forsake us? Ye, who plead the slenderness of your abilities as an excuse for your ignorance of religion, or for your low attainments in it; your worldly prudence, your invincible perseverance, perhaps your consequent success, strip you of this apology, and point to the true reason of your want of success in the divine life, namely, your love, not of God, but of Mammon. How inexcusable are ye, especially if at the head of a family? Every man cannot earn

a subsistence for himself; but what man may not acquire treasures in heaven, to enrich both himself and his family? If he who is able, and neglects to provide the necessaries of this life for them of his own house, is worse than an infidel; surely he who labours not to make provision for their immortal souls is no better than the murderer of both his family and himself. And what if some of us are such monsters?

IV. This expectation is grounded on the intention of God, peculiarly manifest in the revealed scheme of salvation. The divine origin of the Gospel is evidenced by its perfect suitableness to the nature and condition of man. He is a fallen creature, and it is fitted to reinstate him in the favour of God. He is capable of endless improvement, and it is fitted to promote his immeasurable progress. The end of the Gospel with respect to man is, to restore to him the friendship and image of God, forfeited by the apostasy of our first parents, and grossly contemned by our multiplied actual transgressions. To the accomplishment of this end, three means are indispensable; 1*st*, A vindication of the honour of God, while he pardons penitent sinners, who can make no adequate atonement for their transgressions; 2*d*, A revelation of this method of dispensing forgiveness, containing a complete rule of faith and manners; and, 3*d*, A divine power to interest men in the deliverance,

through faith in this revelation, producing holy obedience. The propitiation in Christ's blood is the first of these means; for "God hath set it forth, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." The Bible is the second; for it was written principally that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that, believing in him, we might be sanctified through the truths therein contained. And the third is, the Holy Spirit freely offered to all, and by the Word working in many, "to know, and to will, and to do the good pleasure of God."

All these imply the necessity of continued improvement in religion. Christ died to redeem us from the curse of the law; he also died to redeem us, not from some, but from all iniquity. This love of Christ constraineth all who are truly acquainted with it, to imitate and live to him, who is the express image of the infinitely perfect God. And, by the Spirit, we are renewed in the spirit of our mind according to the will of God, and thus rendered capable of knowing, and valuing, and feeling this love if we are true Christians. But when thus renewed we are infants; we must pass through a spiritual childhood and manhood, in order to arrive at the fulness of the measure of the stature of perfect persons in Christ Jesus. Born of the Spirit, we are also trained up by him, according to that divine system of education contained in the Scriptures, and which is admirably calculated to

promote the required progress. Revelation contains truths suited to different capacities and to different periods of life,—"milk for babes, and strong meat for them who are of full age." Its practical demands rise with the privileges of the Christian; "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required." And the rewards, as well as the means of salvation set forth in the Gospel, exact from all the candidates for the crown of glory unwearied endeavours "to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." And though the future reward will be of grace, and not of works, yet will it be proportioned to the use and improvement of talents. He who surpasseth his fellow-labourers in the work of faith and love, shall reap a richer harvest of glory and honour. He who is foremost in the Christian race, shall receive the most distinguished wreath of victory. He whose light shines brighter than that of others, enjoying equal privileges, and excites greater numbers to glorify God, will hereafter shine as the sun in the firmament, while they twinkle as stars of inferior lustre and magnitude.

This is the end and substance of the Gospel. How do our attainments correspond to them? By whatever other rules we may be assisted in judging ourselves, it is by the Word of God we shall be tried at last; and by it the best estimate of character should be formed at present. It is a glass in which every man may see his face. By it let us endeavour to ascertain our state and habit of mind

in a dependence on the Spirit of God, who dictated it, and who by it still savingly illuminates. Hath God set us apart, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience? If he has separated us from the world lying in wickedness, what are our present apprehensions of the divine Being, compared with our first practically affecting discoveries of him, as the infinitely perfect Creator, and Governor, and Judge of the universe? Do we now so see God as with the eye that we habitually "abhor ourselves," because of our imperfect resemblance to him; and habitually "repent in dust and in ashes," because of sin mingling with our most conscientious endeavours to imitate the beauties of his holiness. The stains of a white garment, which are invisible at midnight, which are scarcely perceptible at twilight, become offensive deformities in presence of the sun. What is the strength and liveliness of our faith in God, and our love to him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, on comparing them with the first operations of these divine principles, and after making suitable allowances for the adventitious warmth of youth and novelty? And in comparison with their first influences, what is now their power to mortify sin and perfect holiness, to subdue slavish fear, and to fill with peace and joy in believing? Children, are ye more humble and harmless, more meek and ready to learn? Ye who are still in your youth, do ye more devoutly and practically remember your Creator? do ye flee youthful unholy af-

fections, and cultivate sobermindedness? Ye, who have arrived at the middle of your course, doth the word of God abide in you? are ye strong in the Lord? have ye overcome the evil one? and, while diligent in business, are ye fervent in spirit, serving the Lord? Aged persons, have ye known him who was from the beginning? are ye sober, grave, temperate, sound in the faith, in charity, and in patience, and teachers of good things? Ye rich in this world, are ye neither high-minded, nor are ye trusting in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; are ye doing good, that ye may be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate? And ye poor, are ye poor in spirit, rich in faith, and daily learning to be more contented with your state? In a word, is the degree of your progress, as clearly ascertained by the moral brightness and usefulness of your life, as the height of the sun is generally to be ascertained by the increasing splendour and warmth of his beams? And if your path is like the morning light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day, is not this your rejoicing, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but the grace of God, you have your conversation in the world? Being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, doth not the Spirit bear witness?

How reasonable appears the expectation of the text, that the religious improvement of every man will correspond to his talents, years, and opportu-

nities, since it is evidently grounded on the intention of God, manifest in our rational nature; the progress of our faculties and opportunities of religious improvement, the increase of our duties in number and difficulty, and in the scheme of salvation revealed in the Scriptures? And O how powerful the motives to a life of progressive holiness, included in these reasons of it! Grovelling indeed must that man be who pants not to enter on this career of the noblest ambition,—a career in which the greatest men glory to run, with holy rivalship, —a career which infallibly leads to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ! Dead must that man be to every generous emotion, who springs not with grateful alacrity into this course, which divine mercy and grace open up, and render a way "of pleasantness and peace!"

SERMON II.

Job xlii. 5, 6.—"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

ALL of us have "heard of God with the hearing of the ear;" but who among us have heard as Job heard of him? If not, our hearing may aggravate our guilt and condemnation. Some of us may flatter ourselves that "our eyes have seen God;" but have these lively apprehensions of him been the visions of a heated imagination, the delusions of Satan, or the spiritual manifestations of the Most High, to sanctified souls? Have they produced in us the same fruits they produced in Job? In consequence of our enlarged discoveries of God, have we "abhorred ourselves, and repented in dust and ashes?" Should we say, "this is language becoming notorious sinners only when first returning to God," we would prove ourselves to be ignorant of God, when "he manifesteth himself to his people in that other way than he does to the world." And should we imagine that affliction is not a season for intimate intercourse with God, and of high self-improvement, the experience of Job, described in these verses, is fitted to set us right. For these reasons, the text deserves the serious attention of us all.

The substance of it may be comprehended under these two heads,—1*st*, The degrees of the saving knowledge of God possessed by Job at different times; 2*d*, The effect of the higher degrees on his heart.

I. The degrees of the saving knowledge of God possessed by Job at different times. The first of these is described by him in these words,—"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear." This, however, is not the unavailing hearsay knowledge of God, alas, too common in the visible church. There are few or none among you, who has not often heard of God, from your parents, your teachers, your friends, and your ministers. Many of you can speculate, and talk plausibly, concerning his attributes and works. But what correspondence is there betwixt this knowledge and the state of your heart, and the state of your life? None, none at all. Your understanding enjoys a cold and sickly light; but your heart and your life are wrapped in the darkness of the world, or in religious form destitute of power. Not so the hearing of Job. It savingly determined his will to choose God for his portion, and regulate his practice by the law of God: "he was a perfect and upright man, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil."—Chap. i. 1. It included that knowledge of the living and true God, and of the promised Redeemer, which our Lord tells us is connected with eternal life, and is an essential component part of it.—John xvii. 3. It was faith founded on the tes-

timony of God concerning himself; "faith that cometh by the hearing of the word;" faith that is of the operation of the Holy Spirit." This faith, ye know, is assured of the being and rights of God; and it substantiates something of his excellencies, as the object of divine hope.—Heb. xi. 1. Hence faith inspires the mingled fear and love of God; hence it cherisheth good will to mankind, and temperance in all things; hence it calls forth the exercise of religious affections, suited to the worship and the commandments of God, and his painful appointments; hence it cultivates patience with hope, and submission with humble trust. Such were the effects of Job's hearing by the ear of God, on his practical judgment, temper, and conduct; and such will ever be the effects of saving faith, which this was, in proportion to its strength.

2d, The higher degree of saving knowledge of God possessed by Job, he thus describes,—"now, mine eye seeth thee." This was a privilege enjoyed by Abraham, "to whom God appeared," Gen. xvii. 1; by Moses, with whom "the Lord spake mouth to mouth, and who beheld the similitude of the Lord," Num. xii. 8; by the elders of Israel, "who saw the God of Israel," Ex. xxiv. 10; and here, by Job, who "heard the Lord speak out of the whirlwind," Job xxxviii. 1. We are not to interpret this as if these persons had beheld the person of God; for "no man hath seen God at any time;" in this sense he is invisible: they saw some symbol of his

gracious presence, while he communicated his will by articulate sounds. This is a more perfect degree of knowledge of God than what is received by report. The symbol represents that perfection of the character of God, which he intends to unfold to the mind and commend forcibly to the heart of the believing spectator; and the words which accompany the representation form a commentary on it that leaves nothing unexplained. Thus, God is not heard of, but seen; is not believed in, but felt; and is not this knowledge of him more distinct and complete, more interesting and impressive, than that derived from testimony? Undoubtedly it is; and, therefore, it was the knowledge of God enjoyed by our first parents in Paradise, and will be the knowledge of him which the blest in heaven shall enjoy.—Matt. v. 8.

It may be said, this sight of God is miraculous, and belongs not to the New Testament times, when revelation is completed. True, God creates no new symbol of himself, and no longer converses with an audible voice with those to whom he draws near; but he continues to do what is equivalent to this, what is the same in essence. It was not the symbol and the accompanying words that alone enabled Job to say to God, "mine eye seeth thee." All Israel beheld the flame, and heard the thunder and the words of Jehovah on Mount Sinai; but they did not all see him as Job saw him. It was the Holy Spirit that drew aside the veil which concealed the glory of the Lord in the symbol, that strengthened

the mind's eye to contemplate the manifested excellency, and that disposed and enabled the heart to receive the communications of his grace. Now, to all this the spiritual manifestations of God to his people, under the New Testament, very closely correspond. The promise of our Lord, on this important head, demands our serious attention.—John xiv. 21—23. From this we are encouraged to expect, that God will make peculiar, and powerful, and sweet manifestations of himself to his people, in all ages of the last and most perfect dispensation; Nor is the manner of making these spiritual discoveries of himself so widely different from the manner of those in ancient times. If he employed fire, or a cloud, or a whirlwind, or the human form in the patriarchal and Mosaic ages, as symbols of himself; he still employs the cloud of affliction, the splendour of prosperity, and sacred elements in the sacraments, as symbols of himself; and he still employs his Holy Spirit to enable his people, "with open face, to behold his glory" in them; and he still employs his written word as the infallible commentary on the manifestation. And do not Christians still see God with the mind's eye, when they contemplate the glories of Jehovah, bursting in upon their souls, like the beauteous splendour of the sun rising on the earth, sprinkled with gems, breathing a thousand sweets, and sending forth ten thousand notes of varied melody; when they dwell on them with intense regard, with growing admiration, or re-

verence, or love, or humility; when they drink in streams of delight and bliss, that fill, and occupy, and satisfy every capacity of the immortal spirit. Was not this, or something like this, your experience, favoured believers, when ye contemplated the glory of the Lord declared in the heavens,—when he made himself known to you in the breaking of bread,—when your hearts burned within you as he spake with you,—when ye beheld his power and glory in the sanctuary,—and when he drew near unto you, in answer to your prayers, in the day of trouble, and wrought out a gracious deliverance for you? May not this be called seeing him with the eye, who cannot be otherwise seen; and is it not as much superior to the act of believing on testimony, as seeing is to hearing, as experience is to simple faith? And how delightful to think, that this blessed anticipation of heaven is a privilege of the dispensation under which we live!

II. What are the effects of this sight upon the heart? We cannot be mistaken in this matter. Job informs us, and the Spirit of God records the answer: "Now mine eye seeth thee, and I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." We have seen, and we must remember, that Job's hearing of the ear produced fear, and eschewing evil, and doing good, and patience. Still this sincere and upright man was far from the measure of the stature of a perfect person in Christ Jesus. Something of pride,

and impatience, and self-righteousness, mingled with and stained his many graces, of which he remained, in a great measure, insensible. On various occasions, his complaints were indecent, his expostulations vehement, his desire of death or deliverance far too eager, and his justifications of himself far from justifiable. Thus, light is mingled with much darkness, grace with much sin; thus, the flesh wars with the spirit, and thus imperfect is the work of sanctification, in even good and great men. And, how should this revive the spirit of the contrite one ready to faint, because of the force of remaining corruption, because of the sharpness of the spiritual conflict! In all this there hath nothing overtaken you, but what is common to the most eminent saints in all ages. Out of this state of imperfection have they been brought to the perfection of holiness, to their own astonishment, and to the illustration of the glory of divine grace. Nay, your mourning and trembling over the strength of sin and the weakness of divine grace is more promising than Job's insensibility to the defects of his own character, from which God roused him in an effectual manner. Job justified himself, and ye are condemning yourselves; Job was rich in his own estimation, and ye are poor towards God in your judgment. And are not these intimations in you, that God is drawing near to manifest himself unto you, as your God and Deliverer? With regard to Job, he enjoyed the saving light of the Lord before this time; but it was only the

twilight in which he saw God and divine things, neither with clearness, nor distinctness, nor in a way commensurate with their majestic grandeur, purity, and loveliness. Now the shades of the twilight have vanished; the day of divine grace, which he considered as the night of adversity, has advanced; and the glory of the Lord shines around him as in mid-day splendour, "and in this light he clearly sees light." And what wonders are unfolded to his astonished sight!

These effects are two, and being produced by the glorious perfections of God, they must correspond to them. This is a salutary law of our nature; the perception of excellence in others is intended to produce in our minds a sense of corresponding inferiority and unworthiness in ourselves, that we may be humbled and amended. And this is the effect of excellence on every well-regulated mind,—on every mind under the teaching of the Spirit of God. As this law operates in the natural, so it operates in the spiritual manifestations of excellence. Greatness excites a lively sense of our littleness; sound health, of the loathsomeness of our ulcerated sores; cleanliness, of our filthiness; knowledge, of our ignorance; rectitude, of our dishonesty; and generosity, of our selfishness and ingratitude. Therefore, by examining the effects here described, we shall ascend to their causes—to the manifested perfections of God, that produced them in the mind of Job.

1*st*, Job "abhorred himself,"—that is, according

to the Scriptural acceptations of the original word, he despised, he hated, and he loathed himself. A counterfeit of this self-abasement, self-displeasure, and self-detestation, sometimes passeth current for the genuine spiritual affections of the text, to the delusion of many souls. But you may easily, and ye ought carefully, to distinguish them. The counterfeit ends in a return to sin, or ends in despair; the genuine, in repentance unto life, as we shall see very soon. The counterfeit springs from a sense of the disgrace and the sufferings occasioned by sin; the genuine is produced by a lively and affectionate regard to the perfections of God, as we shall now show you. Formerly Job had high thoughts of himself, xxxi. 6; now he sees and apprehends more fully and strongly the glorious grandeur of God, which causeth angels to veil their faces before him, and glorified spirits to prostrate themselves in his presence; and he looks down with self-contempt on his own littleness and nothingness as a creature of the dust, as an intelligent creature of limited and perverted faculties, as a renewed creature, in whom the chaos of imperfection and sin struggles against and retards the new creating work of God. Formerly Job thought himself entitled to sit in judgment on the government of God, and to question the equity and wisdom of his procedure, xix. 7; now he sees the glory of wisdom, that cannot err; of righteousness, that can do no iniquity; and of goodness, that doth not afflict

willingly, neither grieve the children of men; and he looks down on his perverse folly, his impious injustice to God, and his daring presumption, with indignation, and resentment, and unalterable hatred. Formerly Job pled the integrity of his life, and the purity of his heart and conduct, xxiii. 10; now, he sees the glory of God's holiness—which is light, in which there is no darkness at all; beauty, in which there is no blemish; loveliness, that engageth every affection of the renewed heart; and he looketh down on sin, on his own sin, as the thing, in the whole universe of God, the most opposite to his nature, that abominable thing which the soul of God hateth,—pervading every power of his soul, every action of his life, and rendering him and his services, as a thing altogether unclean in the eyes of divine holiness,—he looketh down on it with loathing that sickens his soul. When a man thus despiseth, and hates, and loathes himself for sin that he hath done, for sin that dwelleth in him, his life is a living death,—a state of wretchedness altogether intolerable; he is ready, he is desirous to go out of himself, to take refuge in the revealed mercy of God, and thankfully to avail himself of the manifestations of his sovereign grace. This was precisely what Job did when brought to this mortifying knowledge of himself.

2d, Job "repented in dust and ashes." Job had already turned from sin unto God, in the change of his mind and the tenor of his life. Indeed, the life of the godly man is nothing else than a continued

repentance,—a continued departing farther from sin, and a continued approach to God in affection and practice. And there are circumstances which render the steps of his progress remarkably greater and more quick at one time than at another,—that carry him so fast and so far forward, that all which was formerly done is forgotten, and seems as nothing. Peculiar manifestations of God's mercy, connected with his righteousness, are among the most powerful means of quickening the repentance of believers, as in the experience of Job. His awful views of the grandeur, and holiness, and justice, and wisdom of God, and his deep and agonizing views of his own guilt and vileness, would have plunged him into the abyss of despair, had not God manifested the glory of his mercy, that hath no pleasure in the death of sinners, that rather wills that all should come to the knowledge of the truth and live. Even the manifestation of mercy would not have encouraged him to repent; a view of God's mercy alone would have left room to apprehend the demands of inviolable justice, and the execution of those threatenings denounced by unchangeable truth. Therefore God must have appeared to him, as he did symbolically afterwards under the law, as seated on a throne of grace, whereon he had received the atonement that satisfies the demands of his justice, and exhausts the curse denounced against sin, and renders him just when he justifies believers in this method of reconciliation. It is when Job sees that

the exercise of mercy to returning sinners in this way actually magnifies the justice and truth of God, actually brings an accession of glory to his perfections and government, that he is drawn to repent by the cords of love and the bands of a man. He renews the confession of his sins, with a heart-rending sense of their evil, as committed against God. "Against thee, O Lord, thee only have I sinned, and in thy sight done this evil." He hath already renounced sin, all sin; but he renews his renunciation with increasing solemnity and self-abhorrence, and with increasing purpose of heart, especially against his own sin, and all the temptations to it. He hath already turned to God; but he repeats his dedication to him with a devotedness more enlightened and grateful,—more entire and fervent. This is the repentance brought forth, when a man is turned by the Spirit of God, in answer to the prayer, "Turn me and I shall be turned;" this is the repentance which includes in it actual amendment, "a dying to sin, and a living unto righteousness,"—this is the "repentance unto life, not to be repented of;" without which all anguish and remorse for sin is insignificant, or a gross and dangerous delusion.

When Job thus repented, it was "in dust and ashes." The ancients of the patriarchal and Mosaic ages clothed themselves in sackcloth, put ashes on their heads, and sat down on a heap of ashes, to denote the depth of their humiliation and of their

sorrow for sin before God, Isaiah lviii. 5, 6. By this they intimated that the vilest situation was not too low for their unworthiness, nor could it sufficiently express their indifference to earthly comfort and joy. All humiliation and sorrow for sin ought to be deep. To sin against the bounties of Providence, the long-suffering patience of God, the free offers of mercy and grace, the plain demands of his law, the conflicts of natural conscience, and the strivings of the Holy Spirit, calls for great self-abasement and profound godly grief. But oh! what abasement so low, what grief so profound, as becomes the confessed iniquities, transgressions, and sins of a favoured servant, an honoured friend of God? He sins against regenerating grace, redeeming love experienced, against pardon received, friendship bestowed, the honours of sonship conferred, against the image of God in being renewed on his heart, against the hope of the foretaste of heaven, against prayers, and promises, and vows sacramentally offered, against all the anguish of an awakened and all the heavenly peace of an approving conscience. Let God appear in the glory of his love and righteousness, as the object of holiest awe and supreme love, and set these sins in array before the astonished conscience of the renewed offender, in all their baseness of ingratitude, in all the criminality of aggravations, and how feebly will shame and confusion of face, and bones that are broken and out of joint, convey the humiliation and sorrow of heart

which he experienceth! Could blushes that burn, or tears of blood express the anguish of his heart, broken for having wounded God, who is love, in the house of his friends? Profound and bitter as this grief is, there is a sweetness in it which the mourner would not exchange for the liveliest transient joys of the world. There is a peculiar pleasure in perceiving that God hath in faithfulness taken away the heart of stone; in paying a bounden duty to an offended God, not as an atonement, but acknowledgment due for sin; in weeping bitterly, with Peter, who received a complete pardon, and was received into peculiar favour; and in sowing in tears, that a harvest of joy may be reaped in due season. For this reason, the word employed to signify the saving grace, repentance, is also employed to signify consolation; repentance includes consolation in itself, and is followed by strong consolation. Thus it was that this man of God "repented in dust and ashes;" and speedily was his pardon of all his sins and acceptance with God testified, so that his mourning was turned into rejoicings.

1*st*, How inexcusable are those among us who have not heard of God "by the hearing of the ear," as this patriarch did. Ye have all heard of God, ye could not but hear of God, in this place. But after all, are there not some among you who are ignorant of his perfections, his law, his gospel? What have those parents to answer for who have allowed you

to grow up in ignorance, and how will they answer to God and to you before the throne of judgment? O, parents, remember your vows at baptism, recorded in heaven, to be produced on the great day of accounts; and labour to instruct your children, and to have them instructed by others, in the knowledge of God, that ye and your children may not come under this fearful condemnation! What can ye say for yourselves whose hearts convict you of ignorance,—whom I know to be ignorant? Had your parents brought you up to no trade, no labour, would this have been an excuse for your doing nothing to support yourselves honestly? And can it be an excuse for your continuing in ignorance of God, that your parents neglected your education, seeing the knowledge of God is the great business for which ye have been sent into the world,—seeing without this there is a curse on all you possess,—seeing there are so many means of instruction all around you? It is never too late to learn, and ye cannot begin now too soon; for "the Judge standeth at the door." Many of you know God, so as to be able to think and speak of him with something of Scriptural correctness, and to pay him the outward acts of public worship with some regularity; but can ye say, that the knowledge of God is the rule of your hearts and your lives, that your greatest grief is coming short of its requirements, and your greatest joy walking conscientiously in the light of the Lord? Can ye say that you search the Scrip-

tures daily, that you may know the evils of your hearts and lives more thoroughly, and that ye may strive against them more successfully,—that ye may improve in truth, and love, and holiness? Though ye should say ye do all this, I cannot believe you, while your hearts accuse you of continued acts of dishonesty, of drunkenness, of profaning the Lord's name, of doing your own work, seeking your own pleasure, and speaking your own words, on the Lord's day, or of behaving undutifully in any of the relations of life, or of allowing children and servants to commit any of these sins unrestrained. And whence comes it that your knowledge and your religious forms even are unavailing? Plainly, they are unsanctified, they are not under the influences of the Spirit of God. Without the grace of God, your knowledge will only aggravate sin, and your services be a lifeless sacrifice,—a solemn abomination. It is melancholy to think how little the offices of the Holy Spirit are known, or considered, or improved. How can reading, or hearing, or catechising, or praying even, be profitable, while this is the case? Can ye expect him to honour you with his presence or blessing, while ye rob him of his honour by undervaluing his influences? And are there not some of you who believe in God in truth, but whose faith is weak, and shaken, and accompanied by inconstancy in the work of God, and its consequent fearfulness of heart? Behold Job, without a written instruction from God, taught

only by tradition, "sincere and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil, sacrificing in the day of prosperity, and blessing God when he taketh away as well as when he giveth." And do not his attainments in faith reproach your feeble and wavering faith, amid the clear, and full, and written records of God's will, amid his many and significant ordinances, and all the gracious promises of the gospel?

2d, Why are we not all aspiring after more intimate and affecting knowledge of God than that which consisteth in hearing of him by the hearing of the ear? God has been, and is, and will continue to be, seen with the spiritually enlightened eye of the mind. Are not the perfections of God, impressed on the material world, more clearly and pleasurably seen, when he removes the shades of night, and shines on them with the cheering beams of the sun? And will not his perfections, impressed on the great work of salvation, be more clearly and pleasurably seen, when the Holy Spirit disperses those clouds of ignorance, and prejudice, and sin, that obscure them, and shines on them with all the interesting light of a morning sun? Assuredly God is near to every one of his people in his word and in his ordinances; and if we draw near to him in them, "in spirit and in truth," he will draw near unto us. We shall not see him with the bodily eye, save in the sacred symbols, but we shall see with the mind's eye his power and glory, and experience the salutary influences of this manifestation.

Let us seek deliverance from the mists and fogs of vanity, and earthly-mindedness, and indifference to the excellencies of God; and we shall behold them disperse, and enjoy the light, and life, and love, and purity, and strength, imparted by the unveiled glories of the Father of Lights, and the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

Many dreams of the imagination are taken for the special manifestations of God; and many unsanctified emotions and affections for the spiritual effects of them. Caution against the extravagancies of enthusiasm is necessary, as well as against the meagre and lifeless religion of mere human and perverted reason. Of the manifestations of God's special and gracious presence we may judge, as our Lord hath taught us to judge of the teachers of religion, "by their fruits shall ye know them." That Job saw God in a real, and spiritual, and edifying manner, there can be no manner of doubt. Now, what were the fruits of his powerful apprehension of God?

When Job said to God, "now mine eye seeth thee," he also could say to the Searcher of hearts, who could not be imposed on, who would have instantly detected, and exposed, and punished hypocrisy so daring in such circumstances, "and I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." On this case I have only one remark to make, and it is this: Several manifestations of God to his favoured servants are recorded in the Scriptures, and the

effects of them all are the same in substance, namely, a more awfully deepened godly fear, and humility, and repentance, and that all these increase in proportion to the brightness of the manifestation. Ye have never seen God, who abhor the idea of abhorring yourselves, and of repenting in dust and ashes. What Scripture evidence is there of your intimate communion with God, O ye who have become vain and self-conceited, and despisers of others, in proportion to the increase of your knowledge of God? Instead of concluding that ye have fallen off, or even fallen away, because ye see more of sin and distance from God in yourselves, and suffer more anguish of heart for sin, than when ye first turned unto God, believers, ye may conclude, that all this is owing to a greater nearness to God. And as this manifestation, and the benefits of it, are enjoyed often in affliction, how should this reconcile believers to affliction: how should it enable them to distinguish sanctified from unprofitable affliction, and to hope that deliverance is at hand when it works in this manner! Amen.

SERMON III.

GEN. iii. 12.—"And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

WE love to trace mighty rivers to their source. What stream so mighty, what source so far distant, yet of such consequence to ourselves, as that of the human race, coeval with the beginning of time itself?

Here the condition and the behaviour of our first parents arrest our peculiar regard; particularly in violating the law of their Maker, and in answering for that violation. Their actions in these circumstances interest more deeply than the most important transactions of the most distinguished individuals or nations. These actions of Adam and Eve develop the true character of man; they are the deeds of our first ancestors, the first of human kind, who were our representatives with the Sovereign of the universe; who communicated that nature in which they offended to us and to all their posterity; and who exhibited a lively picture of what we shall be and do in similar circumstances.

Like them, we come into the world under the law of God, sanctioned with the penalty of death, and the reward of life. Like them, we are tempted,

and, destitute of their purity of nature as it came from the hand of God, we yield to temptation. Like them, under a consciousness of guilt, we endeavour to hide ourselves from God, by shutting our eyes in his immediate presence. Like them, we shall be summoned before the righteous Judge of all the earth, to receive the deeds done in the body; though not until our whole course of discipline be ended, and our state be unchangeably fixed. And then, if we remain in a state of opposition to God, like them we shall feel and behave ourselves before the judgment-seat.

How, then, did our first parents feel and acquit themselves in this situation, in which, if we continue in sin, we also must be placed, and placed under greater disadvantages? A picture of the end of a course, now dear to us, perhaps, or at least not sufficiently terrible in our eyes, may awaken us "to strive to enter in at the strait gate;" or, if we have entered, may excite to use our utmost endeavours in fleeing farther from the broad path of destruction. To promote these ends, observe,

I. That Adam, summoned to answer for his conduct, saw God, *i. e.* the symbol of God, with the bodily eye.

The sight of the symbol of God's presence was not unfamiliar to him; but how different its former from its present appearance! Soon after our first parents discovered that their celestial robe of inno-

cence was gone, they heard the sound of the Lord growing louder and louder in the garden, in the west wind of the day. While the breeze whispered through the fragrant foliage of Eden, a noise is heard, which indicated an approaching storm,—which indicated the approach of the divine symbol; a noise like the fearfully swelling notes of the trumpet on the mount of Sinai, Exod. xix. 19; or the sound of the Shechinah in the vision of Ezekiel, i. 24; which was as the noise "of great waters, of a mighty host, of the voice of God," when he thundered in the heavens. As guilt makes man fearful, so it bereaves him of consideration. Our criminal ancestors vainly strove to hide themselves from the Lord among the trees of the garden. From this lurking-place the command of God drags them, trembling, into his presence.

The Shechinah had no longer its mild and encouraging lustre. As the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame which consumed not the bush, and which attracted his inquisitive, unterrified regard, Exod. iii. 2, so he was wont to appear to Adam and Eve in innocence; but as he descended on Horeb, "in a fire," Exod. xix. 18, which flamed into the midst of heaven, with "clouds and darkness," Deut. iv. 11, in some such manner came he to try and sentence this rebellious pair.

Fain would they flee from his dreadful presence; fain would they avert their countenances from this tremendous sight. Irresistible respect for the Judge,

and unaccountable yet humiliating terror, rivetted their eyes on God, "a consuming fire." From this spectacle, the rending heavens, the earth yawning under their feet, could not for a moment have turned their eyes aside. Observe,

II. That, when questioned, Adam confessed the crime of which he was before painfully conscious.

In the hour of temptation the forbidden fruit seemed at once the feast of honest appetite, of taste refined, and of intellectual ambition, Gen. iii. 6; a feast which the goodness of God could not, in reality, refuse; the sin which, if sin there could be in such enjoyment, the mercy of God would surely pardon. At that moment, the voice of Eve, inviting him to eat of it, seemed the voice of wisdom attuned by love; and the hand of Eve, presenting it, the hand of benignity, unenvious of his prerogatives, and generously imparting her own experienced felicity. In the moment of sober reflection the illusion vanisheth; both see themselves despoiled of innocence, and honour, and glory; and, in place of these, covered with the filthy rags of guilt, disappointment, and shame, v. 7. Then the voice of God fills them with fear, v. 8; and the inquiries of God, answering their only end, awaken them to the confession of their crime, v. 9—12.

The inquiry, it deserves to be remarked, is limited to the fact and the law. Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not

eat? This interrogation excludes from the view all that inflamed appetite and passion, all that seduced or bewildered reason, all that soothed conscience into a criminal acquiescence; it exposeth the pitiful sophistry of the tempter, the folly and desperate wickedness of the offender's heart, and the naked and shameful deformity of the undeniable transgression.

Adam feels the vanity of subterfuge as to the fact; he feels, with horror, the unerring intelligence of a present God, scrutinizing his whole being, and rendering it transparent as the thin cloud through which the meridian sun pours his fervid rays; and the dread confession is wrung from his reluctant soul, "I did eat." Observe,

III. That Adam, before God his Judge, was filled with fear.

If the sound of God's approach made him afraid, drove him into an unavailing retreat, how must the presence of God, clothed in the terrible majesty of supreme Judge, have affected him? Had not the secret power of God upheld him, for the purposes of justice and mercy, his soul must have failed; he must have become, in this situation, "as a dead man."

While the language of his confession hung trembling on his lips, the precise terms of the divine law, as originally promulgated, as now repeated by God in his inquiry, must have rung in his ears,—must

have thrilled horribly through his heart: "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

The penalty of the divine law presented itself to his view,—a penalty to be executed immediately on himself and on the partner of his guilt,—a penalty to be executed by Him whose word called the world into existence, whose goodness crowned the rebels with glory and honour, whose generosity exacted but this one and light test of his loyalty, whose favours were fresh as transcendent, whose command was new as it was easy to him, formed in the image of God; and whose grace abused, exasperated the divine wrath, as it aggravated the crime.

Before this he experienced the horrors of the spiritual, now he anticipates the pangs of the temporal and the agonies of the eternal death denounced against him. What was said of an impious prince, who saw the hand of God record his approaching destruction, may be applied to this first lord of the lower world, when he saw the lips of God opening to pronounce his awful doom, as Dan. v. 6: "Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him; so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." Observe,

IV. That here ignoble self-love obtains an impotent triumph over generosity and natural affection.

His Creator was supreme in the estimation, in

the heart, of innocent Adam: self is the god of Adam sinning. To self he sacrificed his allegiance to his rightful Sovereign, and his own immortal interests; to self he now sacrificed the most amiable being of the species, and the finest affections of the heart which terminate on a creature.

Could he diminish the criminality of his own offence, and the weight of his own punishment, he is regardless who shall suffer a severer censure, a heavier vengeance than himself. Hence, he criminates Eve to God: "The woman gave me, and I did eat."

He criminates the woman, the less robust person, whom he is bound to treat with delicate tenderness; whom, in error, he is bound to set right, but not to obey; to excuse, but not to accuse,—the woman, bone of his bone, whom he should cherish as his own flesh; and the partner of his heart, whom he should love as his own soul. Thus, in the very morning of their affection, which possessed all the excellencies, and was free from all the defects, of all the most exalted conjugal affections which have since existed, he could contemplate, he could contribute to exhibit her, sunk deeper than himself in guilt, in infamy, and wretchedness!

Nay, he stops not short here; he obliquely criminates God himself, with a view to alleviate his own guilt and wo; that God, whom he has scarcely ceased to celebrate as the infinitely wise and righteous Lord; the source of all his own advan-

tages, especially as the Giver of his most precious comfort—"an help meet for him." That God, thus admired, and adored, and blessed, he thus obliquely criminates: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree, and I did eat."

How dreadful is sin! But lately, Adam was no faint representative of God's moral glory; he conversed with his Maker as a man with his friend; and his felicity was crowned with a sweet and dignified conjugal affection. By sin, the likeness of God on his soul is effaced, and the image of the arch foe of God and goodness imprinted; he now shrinks from the presence of God, who is love, but arrayed in terrors; doing violence to the strongest and best affections of his bosom, he stands forth to arraign at once his consort and his Maker; and, while his vision of glory, honour, and immortality, now melts into air, death eternal, and his region of wo, rapidly rise into view.

But what concern in all this have we, beyond that which is excited by an event, however distant, yet deeply interesting to one or more of our kind? We have the deepest concern, even that of their children, who bear their image as we come into the world; and who, if we continue to tread in their footsteps, must finally transact with the same impartial Judge, and must transact with him under the influence of similar and terrible affections.

I. Like them, if we continue in sin, we must appear before the same Judge, clothed with similar or greater terrors.

It was He, "who, being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God," Phil. ii. 6, and who appeared to our first parents as "a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29, who shall, on the last day, "be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 7—9.

Here, we may flee from his presence in the sanctuary, and in his ordinances; we may go a great way in shunning to appear at the bar of conscience, God's vicegerent; we may go far towards banishing the idea of the true God out of all our thoughts; we may come to flatter ourselves, that, because we do not behold the great Author and Proprietor of the universe with the bodily eye, because we do not necessarily think of him, there either is no God, or that he troubles himself as little with us as we do with him. Of such fools we read, Psalm liii.

The coming of the Lord in judgment shall fearfully undeceive us. By that time, sin may have entombed us in the bowels of the earth or in the caverns of the great deep, may have strewed our dust on the winds; but wherever we are, we shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and come forth

into his immediate presence. Shall we, then, deny the righteousness of God, or the omnipotence of his Christ? Will we indulge the heart in its unbelief, or the eye with its vanities, or the mouth in its foolish or hard speeches? No. The universe contains no object so interesting by its terrors or its allurements as to avert the steadfast gaze from that eye of flame, which is the index of the mind of God towards us,—from those lips which are about to seal our everlasting misery,—from that fire which is issuing from the throne of the eternal, to enwrap the earth and the material heavens in one dread conflagration.

II. There, if we die in our sins, we must, like Adam, acknowledge our guilt.

The eye of him, before whom we must stand, will be as a flame of fire; the light of that flame will pervade our whole man, will exhibit the most secret deformities of our nature and character, to the astonishment and loathing of neighbours and friends and of ourselves. The veil of hypocrisy will be torn asunder, the vapoury delusions of self-love will flee before the stream of light, the deeds of retirement and darkness will be set forth in the glare of noonday, the thoughts of folly, and even the words of idleness scattered over the tide of time and to all the winds of heaven, will be collected, and the overwhelming catalogue recited in the hearing of an assembled universe.

Denial would be vain, confession will be no virtue, and yet is indispensable. What now we conceal from the friends of our bosom, what our tongues have not dared to pronounce, what we blushed or shuddered to think of, even in the thickest shades of night, that must we openly acknowledge, and out of our own mouths shall we be condemned,—if we die in our sins.

III. Like Adam, if we live and die in sin, we shall make this confession, with all the horror of criminals, in the view of immediate and eternal death.

In vain have we persuaded ourselves that the mercy of God might be relied on, even when we departed from the paths in which mercy is promised; for now we perceive that God will not suffer the sinner to go unpunished, and his own majesty unvindicated. In vain have we persuaded ourselves that the terrors of the Lord consist in threats of awful sound, but of little real danger; in figures of formidable aspect, but of little real significance; for now God is seen to be a consuming fire to his adversaries,—a fire which shall never be quenched. Then, "the sinners in Zion shall be afraid; fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrites: for who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Is. xxxiii. 14.

IV. As in Adam, so in us too, shall guilt extin-

guish benevolent affection, and convert us into bitter accusers of our dearest friends, if we live and die in our sins.

If our first father, endowed with original righteousness, whose conscience was not seared by the habit of sinning, who was in the body, and possessing a capacity of being restored to the exercise of the benevolent affections; if he accused his beloved Eve and his Maker, of what will not we, born, living, dying, and sealed in sin, be capable in the paroxysm of inflamed terrified self-love?

In a state of reigning sin, self-love is predominant. Howsoever a mild or indolent temper, the restraints of civil society, or the strength of merely human affection or of imagined piety, may control its movements; in that state self-love is supreme, and secretly genders envy, and malice, and revenge. This doctrine, against which ignorance and self-love vociferously exclaim, is verified by him who keepeth his heart with diligence, and is confessed by an inspired writer of high moral reputation, Titus iii. 3: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Thus it is, in reality, with every man retaining the image of the first Adam, however suppressed, and concealed, and varnished over his self-love may be; and no sooner are the external and accidental restraints removed, no sooner is the mind racked with the apprehension of personal

punishment, than the airy semblance of piety and friendship, yea, than natural affection itself, dissolves, and self-love endeavours to vindicate or to revenge itself at the expense of whomsoever.

In the last day, we shall accuse God of being a hard master, Matth. xxv. 24, and Christ of the want of veracity, v. 44; and what wonder that we should accuse our dearest relatives and friends? Of what crimes stand foremost in our arraignment, and to the commission of which our best beloved among the children of men led the way, by their invitation, their example, their negligence, of these shall we accuse them, and God who gave them. Of these the neighbour will accuse his now courteous and obliging neighbour; the servant, the master who heaped temporal favours upon him; the hearer, the minister who won affection by his humanity, but lost souls by his unfaithful distribution of the word of life, or by an example conformed to the world; the friend, his friend whose heart was his own; the child, the parent who reared him with tenderness, and plentifully provided for his earthly comfort; and of these sins will the consort accuse his consort, whom he cherished as his own flesh, for whose worldly benefit he hath smiled at toil, and braved death. Of these affections nothing remains save the exasperating recollection of what a snare they formed to inveigle and entangle the soul in sin, and involve in ruin inevitable. The countenances which now beam benignity on us will then become hideous with

rage, and distorted with revenge against us,—the lips on which we now hang with delight, will then pour forth execrations on our devoted head. Thus will our dearest, most exquisite enjoyments, if not used for the purposes for which they were bestowed, if employed to oppose the purpose of grace, be converted, most justly, most awfully, into empoisoned, inexhaustible sources of torment. Aware of this, aware of the excruciating augmentation of his tortures by the arrival in the abode of wretchedness of his younger brethren, seduced or confirmed by his example in wickedness, Dives earnestly requests Abraham to send some one from the dead, to prevent their sharing and increasing his misery now, as they had done his luxury, hard-heartedness, and impiety on earth.

Of what comparative importance is it that we now live harmoniously in our neighbourhood, in our families, or in our congregational relations; if all these affections are tainted by our common sins, are to be converted into mutual hatred and revenge, mutual accusations and curses,—are to become ingredients in the cup of gall, the cup of trembling, the inexhaustible cup of wrath? Of what comparative importance is it that we now bear the name, enjoy the outward privileges, and perform many of the outward duties of the children of God; if we still bear on our souls the image of Adam in sin, and if with him we must, in this

state, appear before God arrayed in terror and seated on the throne of judgment?

Our state will then be infinitely more dreadful than his, after all his guilt and confession, trembling and bitterness of accusation, nay, after all the miseries denounced against him. For even then, God opened up to him a reserved store of mercy and grace, marked out to him a new course of hopeful discipline, and reconciled him to offending Eve, by the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head,—should destroy the works of the devil, and people paradise with her offspring. This promise, believed and acted upon, restored to the penitent pair the image of God, together with much of the sweetness of conjugal affection, and the solid hope of a better than the forfeited immortality. But if we, in the likeness of sinful Adam, are sisted before the Judge of the world, we shall come more guilty, and in more desperate circumstances than he,—we shall come guilty of having trampled not only on the commandments, but also on the Son of God, not promised but actually set forth a propitiation for sin,—we shall come having done despite unto the Spirit of grace, and "there shall remain for us no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Heb. x. 26, 27.

Let us then, having been born of the flesh, be concerned that we be born again of the Spirit;

otherwise we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Let us, having violated the law, and incurred its curse, seek the peace of God through that faith in Jesus Christ which is of the operation of the Spirit. Let all who are actually children of God through the adoption of Christ, make his law the inviolable rule of their duty, whoever may entice, how great soever the temptation to depart from it. "Let them have no fellowship with the works of darkness, but rather reprove them," Eph. v. 11. "Let them exhort one another daily, lest they should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. iii. 13. Let them consider how negligent they have been in time past, how little of time now remains at the longest, and how precarious even that little is. Let them consider how many among usare hurried away, without a day's or an hour's warning, how many are summoned away in their sleep, at their ordinary employments, or in the midst of their follies and sins; and "let them give all diligence to make their calling and election sure,"—"let them watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation,"—"that they may be always ready" to welcome the approach of the Lord.

What a blessed change would this produce in individuals, in social circles, in worshipping assemblies, while they remain on the earth, and especially when they appear before the throne of judgment! On earth not a little of the purity and love of the honour and felicity of paradise would be enjoyed; and the throne of the Judge would be encircled as

the mercy-seat of our Saviour, dispensing the rewards of grace.

Having received Christ here as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," we shall not fear to meet him clothed with the flaming glories of his judicial office. "Having put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," we shall have the witness in ourselves, that we shall see God and be satisfied with his likeness. Having lived with our relatives and friends, with our ministers or hearers, "as heirs of the grace of eternal life;" with exceeding joy shall the father present his children, the master his servants, the husband his wife, and the pastor his people, saying, "Behold I, and the connexions whom God hath given me!"

And for these ends "may God fulfil in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power," through Jesus Christ. Amen!

SERMON IV.

ISAIAH xlv. 22.—"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

IN discoursing on these words, I purpose to consider, 1*st*, The method of salvation, as represented in them; and to show that this method is safe and infallible: "Be ye saved; for I am God, and there is none else;" and, 2*d*, The exhortation to adopt it: "Look unto me."

I. In considering the method of salvation, as represented in the text, our attention is called to the salvation itself,—the Saviour,—the means of receiving the blessings of salvation,—the unlimited offer of it to the sons of men,—and the promise of God, that they shall be saved who comply with the invitation.

1*st*, The blessing proposed is salvation, or deliverance. In this place it is a spiritual, not a temporal, deliverance that is meant. This salvation includes righteousness, and is such a one as the whole human race stands in need of. We shall best learn the nature of it from the nature of that state out of which it rescues men. It must be, as the Scriptures teach us it is, the exact counterpart of

our first condition. When we inquire into our state by nature and by practice, experience testifies, with revelation, that we are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us, that we are enemies to him in our hearts, and by wicked works; and that we are captives to sin and Satan. Here, salvation must signify a translation out of the darkness of sin and Satan into the clear light of God, a conformity of the will to his will, and of the affections to his love. Without the image of God on our souls, he can no more have fellowship with us, than light can have communion with darkness. But though this image were bestowed on us, though we were no longer excluded from some degree of converse with him, still we would have no merit entitling us to that fulness of divine favour included in eternal life. Adam, formed in the likeness of God, conversed with him in the earthly paradise; but Adam must do this, even God's commandment, in order to enjoy the superior bliss of eternal life promised. In like manner, we must possess a perfect obedience to the law of God, before we can raise our hopes to his continued favour on earth, and to the fulness of his joy in heaven. In this respect, salvation must include a righteousness which entitles the saved to claim the friendship of God, and the reward of keeping his commandments. Great and desirable as these blessings are, much must be done before we can see how they are to be enjoyed. As transgressors of the divine law, we

are not only incapable of communion with God, but we are under the penalty of the law we have broken, we are already condemned; and, till this condemnation is removed, in a way most honourable to the Lawgiver and the law, we are dead in law, we are miserable; and there is no channel through which divine mercy can flow to us. In order, therefore, to the enjoyment of the blessings already mentioned, salvation must imply complete deliverance from the sentence of death, and admission into a state of favour with God.

This is in Scripture styled "a great salvation." Every one who feels that it is essential to his own happiness, to his pressing necessities, will call it great indeed. His desires will go out after it, his heart will pant for it; but he looks in vain to himself, and to the whole creation in heaven and earth, for the attainment of it. A creature, by a derived divine power, may say to yonder mountain, "Be thou removed, and cast into the sea," and it may obey him; but salvation is too great for aught, save the arm of Omnipotence itself, to bring near to the sinner. When awakened to see his need of it, he looks round with an inquisitive, imploring eye, for the Saviour; and while he exclaims, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" lo, the Saviour directs his eye to himself, as his all-sufficient Deliverer, saying, "Look to me, and be saved; I am God, and there is none else."

2*d*, On examining the contexts, we find these words are spoken neither by the Father nor the Spirit. They are spoken by the Lord, his people's righteousness, before whom, as Judge, every knee must bow, and every tongue confess, in the great day. These are titles peculiar to God, manifest in the flesh; and the New Testament writers quote and apply this very passage to him. This application is not rendered questionable, because it is here added, "and besides me there is none else." Each of the three who bear record in heaven claims supreme divinity, and hath it ascribed to him in the Scriptures. These claims cannot be reconciled but by considering them, not as exclusive of any of the three persons from the divinity, but as assertions of the oneness of their nature,—of their equal communion in "the same substance, power, and glory." Here, it is our Emmanuel who makes this claim in the character of the Saviour. He was not then manifest in the flesh; but "he is the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world;" and it is to Him, sustaining this character, that the eyes of transgressors are directed under each of God's dispensations. Under the last, we know more distinctly, that though the Father, with whom originated the deliverance of his people, is called "our Saviour," yet Jesus, in a peculiar manner, "saves his people from their sins."

And is not Jesus all the heart of man could desire in a Saviour? How admirably qualified to

consult the honour of the divine Legislator, and the interests of the transgressors, is he "who is God and man in one person!" Who can question his authority, in the execution of that mediatorial office to which he was anointed by the righteous Judge of all? What room to suspect the fidelity or affectionate zeal of him who said, in the bosom of his Father and of celestial felicity, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God?" And now that he hath done his will, as stipulated in the new covenant, to whom can we go for salvation, but to him in whom it hath pleased the Father "all fulness of divine blessings should dwell?" Are we under the penalty of the broken law?—he "hath redeemed his people from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them, and having power, as the Son of man, to forgive sins." Are we destitute of a righteousness on which we may found and maintain a claim to the friendship of God on earth and in heaven?—as his people's Surety, he hath fulfilled all righteousness; and, according to the promise of God, "by his obedience shall he justify many." Are we unfit for the fellowship of God, because of ignorance, corruption, and sinful habits?—Jesus "hath redeemed his people from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them, that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith," and so be born again of the Spirit, after the image of God.

Say, my friends, is not Christ mighty and able to

save? The merely attentive and candid hearer who compares Jesus and salvation, will answer in the affirmative, and will rest in his assent. The formalist hears of Christ with the hearing of the ear, as he has done for years; he denies not the truths concerning Him, for he never examines them. He who loves his ease more than his Saviour's will or his own salvation, sits with his hands folded, vainly hoping that Jesus will come and save him in some of his slothful slumbers. But the reverse of all this will be the conduct of him into whose heart "God hath shined, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, as it is in the face of Christ the Saviour. This divine light illuminates his understanding, purifies his heart, and calls forth the utmost exertions of his sanctified, active powers. "Blessed Saviour, how great is thy beauty! how great is thy goodness! I know and am sure there is no other name given under heaven whereby I can be saved but thine. Thou art able to save me without any exertion of mine; but thou maintainest the rights of thy sovereignty, and dealest with thy chosen according to their rational natures. All my faculties attend thy commands. No labour will be too great, if I may but receive salvation at thy hand. What shall I do to be saved?"

3d, Were it not for its secret pride, how sweetly satisfactory to such a soul would be the gracious invitation of the Lord, pointing out the means of receiving salvation! "Look unto me, and be ye

saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."—"But will a look be the channel of communication between me and the Fountain of Life," saith even awakened man, in the pride of his heart? "Is it the weakness of my desire of deliverance through Him, or my inability to perform some honourably arduous injunction, that induceth Jesus to appoint a mean of salvation so very easy as this?" My friend, had the Deliverer bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have eagerly attempted it? How much rather shouldst thou obey, when he saith, "Look unto me, and be saved?" Besides, on more particular inquiry, thou wilt find there is a sufficient trial of both thy sincerity and thy powers in looking to Jesus for salvation. It includes three things in it; *1st*, It includes an earnest desire to partake of this salvation, such as Christ offers, namely, making you holy, as well as happy. If you would be saved, like Jonah, feeling yourself cast out of the sight of God, and as in the cavern of hell, you must look to this new and holy temple with earnest desire, Jonah ii. 4. *2d*, Looking to Christ also implies some degree of hope that he will grant you the favourite wish of your soul. With Jehoshaphat, you must say, "O God, wilt thou not save? we have no might, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee." 2 Chron. xx. 12. *3d*, Looking to Jesus here implies waiting on him for salvation in the way of God's appointment. He

who is in this temper can adopt the language of David, and say, "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net."

What think ye now of looking to Jesus for salvation? Is it so very easy as some people are apt to imagine? Is it a single act of the mind? Rather, is it not an operation of the whole soul, which reflects the brightest lustre on the whole rational nature? Is it not of such labour, that it is the work of God, while it is also your work, for it is faith in Jesus Christ? And is this a work discreditable to your powers, intellectual or moral? What knowledge do you need to see your state as it is in the sight of God? What humility is necessary before you will condemn yourselves? What self-denial, before you can renounce all confidence in the flesh, and submit to the righteousness of God in Christ? What intellectual strength, to make you rise above sense, and live by faith on a crucified and an unseen Saviour? What purity of will, to aspire after the holiness of God? What divine fortitude, to make you resolute in passing through many tribulations, that you may, years hence, enter into the kingdom? And what patience is necessary to make you wait, with your eyes ever on the Lord, for such communications of salvation as he may see meet? All this is implied in the cordial compliance with your Lord's invitation, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

The soul that is enlightened, and truly concerned about salvation and the honour of the great Saviour, will cordially embrace his offer, with all the mortifications, all the difficulties, and all the labours, that accompany the acceptance. "Yes, Lord, after many struggles, and after much deliberation, I count it my honourable privilege to look to thee for salvation. And I do look to thee with desire, and hope, and trust, for wisdom to enlighten this benighted mind more and more; for righteousness to secure my pardon and acceptance with God in time and in eternity; for sanctification, to purify this unholy frame, and form it after the image of God; and for redemption from the power of sin, and Satan, and death."

"Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord," saith some poor trembling sinner. "No doubt his salvation is sure. But, as for me, I dare not lift up mine eyes to the habitation of God's holiness. Unless he look on me first; unless he invite me particularly, I must go bowed down all the days of my life. And I am so vile, that I abhor myself; how, then, will the Holy One of God cast a glance on me? I am aged in iniquity; how will he renew his calls on me, who have refused so many?" Not a few in this very assembly have cause to be alarmed for these very reasons. Would to God that all among you who have reason for this concern did now seriously feel it. Alas! the hearts of some are as the highway, beaten hard by the foot of the

frequent traveller; and hence, the devil immediately catcheth away whatever seed is sown in them. For those who are truly concerned, there is a message of encouragement to be now delivered.

4th, This is contained in the unlimited offer of salvation made in the text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." This call we are to understand in a literal or in a figurative sense. In a literal sense, it extends to the nations remotest from Judea,—to the heathen, the promised inheritance of the Son of God; to the uttermost parts of the earth, the promised possession of Christ. Here we discover what an ancient interest these lands had in the saving purposes of the Lord. To these eternal purposes we owe the light of the Gospel we enjoy, and all the healing influences it hath shed on us. How greatly ought this everlasting though general concern of the Lord for these favoured lands to increase our sense of obligation to the Saviour! From the heights of heaven of old, he surveyed the nations of the earth. The piety of one, the science and civilisation of some, and the opulence and power of others, did not make him overlook us, remote, barbarous, and sunk in superstition. No doubt this consideration hath powerfully affected the hearts of some of our countrymen, who have looked to the Lord, and been saved; but, how much more irresistibly were they allured by the more particular call given them, and all in their circumstances, in the figurative meaning of these words!

In this sense of them our Lord addresseth all those persons among us who bear the same sort of character, and are in the same sort of circumstances, as the Gentiles of that age; saying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Ye who are the vilest of sinners, addicted to the grossest vices, without God and without hope in the world, ye are called to look to Christ, and be saved. All ye who were born in families that call not on the name of God, who never were interested in the things that belong to your peace, look to Christ, and be saved. All ye who have broken the bands of a religious education, and, with the prodigal son, are perishing at a dreadful distance from God and heaven, look to Christ, and be saved. All ye who are mourning in darkness, on the borders of despair and hell, look ye to Christ, and be saved. Could I call any stranger to God among you by name, I would, according to the will of God, invite, entreat, and beseech him or her to look to Christ, and be saved. His obedience unto death is sufficient to atone for sins of the deepest dye; his grace to change those, who are tenfold more the children of the devil than others, into the image of God; and his benevolence so overflowing, as to invite all, without exception, to look to Jesus and enjoy the blessings of his merit and power.

5th, After all that has been said, there is an evil heart of unbelief that will from time to time be

questioning the security of this salvation. But how unfounded are these doubts! "Look unto me, all the ends of the earth, and be ye saved; for I am God, and there is none else." Whatever method of salvation he purposes must be infallible. This, then, by faith in Christ is infallible,—for he proposed it to continue from the beginning to the consummation of all things,—he framed it unto a perfect suitableness to the nature and circumstances of the objects of it,—he solemnly undertook to carry it into effect,—and by it he hath saved many, under both dispensations. How, then, can assent be refused to this important truth,—that every perishing sinner who looks to Christ for deliverance shall be saved? It is not because men deny this truth, it is because they will not look to him, that they have not life. Therefore, I proceed,

II. To consider the exhortation of the divine Saviour in the text,—"Look unto me," says he, "all the ends of the earth, and be ye saved; for I am God, and there is none else."

How can I more effectually illustrate this exhortation than by stating, that this method of salvation is of the utmost importance to us,—and that the Saviour himself commends it to our acceptance? Unless we are disposed to disregard our own happiness, and to trample on his majesty and grace without remorse, we must look to him for salvation; for,

1*st*, This method of it is of the utmost importance to us. Without this salvation we are miserable, with it we are blessed, in time and in eternity. Is it not misery to be cast for ever out of the favourable presence of God,—to labour under the bondage of a corrupt nature,—under the tyranny of Satan, and the wrath of the Almighty? And is not every man exposed to this utter wretchedness? What happiness, then, can the heart conceive beyond deliverance from all this load of misery, to the light, and the love, and the holiness of God,—to the enjoyment and the ineffable communications of his favour and friendship in everlasting ages? But, my friends, this deliverance, essential to our present and future welfare, is the very salvation I have been setting before you. The proposed method of obtaining this salvation is of no less importance than the salvation itself. Whatever other means we employ, they will yield nothing but temporary ease, and final disappointment. This method alone is suitable and infallible. We cannot satisfy God for our sins, we cannot restore ourselves to the favour and likeness of God; but there is a Saviour able and willing to do all this for us. If we but look to him with desire, and hope, and resignation, he will assuredly bestow this complete salvation on us. And why should we question the manner of obtaining it? It is becoming the power and grace of the Saviour, and it is no less suitable to our sinful and helpless condition. It is the method adopted in the ever-

lasting counsels of peace, guaranteed by the Son of God, and in all ages rendered effectual to the salvation of many. If God, then, be for those looking to Jesus, who can be against them? Earth and hell may league together against them, and may trouble them much; but they cannot disannul the purpose of God, they cannot turn back the arm of the Almighty, stretched out to save them. And is this method of salvation thus essential to freedom from that wretchedness to which every man is subjected by nature and practice, and to the only true happiness; what will neglect of it prove? It will prove that we have lost not only the moral image of God, not only our reason, but that, sunk below the beasts that perish, we have lost the first principle of all living creatures,—the desire of self-preservation. Unless we are thus utterly self-degraded, we must feel a thirst for happiness, and must, with anxious concern, be weighing the evidences in favour of this kind of it, and of this method of salvation. If any among us are thus exercised, will they not listen attentively to this other interesting consideration, that,

2d, The Divine Saviour himself commends it to their acceptance, saying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." What a variety of persuasive motives, urging us to compliance, does this commendation contain! When the Lord says, "Look," he pledges his unerring wisdom for the certainty of

this method of salvation; and will ye neglect it, and prefer the impulse of folly to the result of the wisdom of God? When he says, "Look," he exerciseth his sovereign authority; and will ye, by setting at nought the command of the Lord, join with the heathen, and the people who imagine a vain thing, saying, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us?" will ye expose yourselves to the much sorer punishment reserved for those who trample on the Son of God? When the Lord says, "Look unto me," he condescends to entreat you, and his entreaty is accompanied by the persuasion of his adorable majesty, of the loveliness of his assumed humanity, of the fervour of his affection for perishing sinners, of the agonies and ignominies of his cross, of the glory and power of his exaltation, and of all the long-suffering of his patience under repeated, and aggravated, and long-continued provocations. Once more, when our Lord says, "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth," he utters a prediction that some of all the ends of the earth shall be saved; consequently, he utters a promise of grace sufficient to ensure the accomplishment of it. Broken in spirit, ye say that you are far from God, and unable to come to him; and in condescension to your weakness, he requires you but to look to him. You complain of the obscurity and unsteadiness of your views of him, while it is your desire to commit yourselves to him for salvation; and he promises you grace suited to your

need, nay, he has begun to bestow it,—for what but grace could convince you of your absolute need of salvation, bend your will to adopt God's method of saving his people, and incline your heart to desire to partake of it as the first of blessings? The day is nigh when you, whose desires are thus sincerely towards the Lord, though you now walk in darkness, shall with strong and steadfast eye "look on him and be lightened." As for you whose desires are not sincere, are not the fruit of a mind awakened, enlightened, and new-directed by the Spirit of God, "your goodness will be but the morning cloud, and the early dew, that soon passeth away."

In fine, O ye of every description, who have not looked to Christ for salvation, how inexcusable are ye! What could the Saviour do for you, consistently with his own honour, that he has not done? Hath he not purchased this salvation with his own blood, commended it to you by his faithful word, employed his authority in commanding you to adopt it; and in threatening you, in case of a refusal, has he not condescended to interest you by his grace and your misery and salvation, and to promise all necessary assistance to direct and invigorate your eyes, desirous of beholding him with holy hope and trust? If you are still careless and unmoved by all these considerations, have ye not reason to fear that the day of grace is drawing to a close; and ought ye not to tremble, lest God be lifting up his hand to

swear that ye shall not enter into his rest? And though ye should sail smoothly through the ocean of life,—though ye should think yourselves better employed in looking at the deep, emitting a faint light amid the darkness, than in looking at the polar star,—in looking at the world, than in looking at Christ,—it will not be always thus. The day is at hand when he shall come in the clouds; and then ye must see him from whom ye now turn away,—then ye must receive, not the great salvation which he now offers, but the curse which ye desire not to escape,—then ye must depart from him, in conformity to your own present unaccountable inclination,—depart from him, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. This, then, is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation; to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, when he saith unto you,—"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

Thus, I have endeavoured to set before you the method of salvation, as represented in the text, together with the certainty of it, and some considerations enforcing compliance with the gracious and authoritative exhortation given,—"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

SERMON V.

1 Pet. ii. 7.—" Unto you therefore who believe he is precious."

A SYSTEM of religion may be compared to a house built for the worship of God. The foundation and corner-stone of this building is of essential importance; and is that concerning which the builders differ and dispute with the greatest keenness. Christ is that stone, which is still rejected by multitudes, as it was by the rulers of the Jews, in the construction of their religious edifice. But the apostle assures those " who have tasted that the Lord is gracious," that Christ is the foundation laid in Zion by God, and on which they, as living stones, have been built. " Unto you therefore," saith he, " who believe he is precious." However he may be despised by others who are ignorant of him, unto you who know him by experience he is of inestimable value; " unto you" he is " an honour," Rom. ii. 7,—" a price," Matth. xxvii. 6, 9; yea, more accurately speaking, " he is preciousness" itself; all that is valuable in every kind of honourable price.

Christ is precious to you who believe, for the sake of his own personal and excellent glory; for what he is to the Father and the Spirit; for his infinite love

in undertaking the work of your salvation; for the suitableness and sufficiency of his offices, as your Redeemer; for the opposition of wicked men and devils; and for the sake of what he has already done, what he is now doing, and what he will assuredly do, for you. I address myself to you, believers, without any previous delineation of character, because I am persuaded there are believers present, and because I desire to fix the attention of my whole audience on the preciousness of Christ,—that those who have faith may each gradually come to this conclusion: "I feel Christ is precious to me, and therefore I am convinced that I believe;" and that those who have not faith may each be led irresistibly to this conclusion: "Alas! I am no believer, for Christ is not precious to me." May the Spirit of God render his word thus profitable!

I. Christ is precious to you who believe, on account of his own personal and excellent glory. As the sun succeeding the darkness of night, so hath the person of Christ risen in the eye of your faith, and before his sweet glories every meaner light has melted away. And, as the light of the sun excites increasing admiration, when its rays are separated, and its beauteous colours are exhibited in their variety, distinct yet shading into each other, in the rainbow; so the glory of Christ's person appears in richest magnificence, when the rays of it

are considered apart, and yet blending together in sweetest harmony. But the believer is furnished with no instrument to distinguish the rays of Christ's glory in an adequate manner; their combined influence forms a radiance too dazzling for him to gaze on; and therefore he contemplates the excellency of Christ with awe, and speaks of it with diffidence. To you he is precious, as excellent in divine glory. How dim soever your vision, ye see him clothed with all the perfections, Heb. i. 8; Isa. vi. 1, &c.; performing all the great and marvellous works, Heb. i. 3, 10; and receiving all the peculiar titles, Isa. ix. 6; John v. 23; and worship, Heb. i. 6; John v. 23, of the Supreme God. Whatever your former opinions and language may have been, does not the language of convinced Thomas express your present admiration, reverence, and love, "My Lord, and my God." He is precious to you, as excellent in all the perfections of human nature, as it came from the hands of God. Ye have examined the history of "the man Jesus," from his conception to his grave; and ye are satisfied that his nature, his life, and his death, are "without sin," Heb. vii. 26; ye are satisfied that he shines in all the qualities of wisdom, and goodness, and grandeur of soul, Luke ii. 40, Acts x. 38, that can exalt humanity, and render it amiable. Ye love your relatives, ye love your friends, ye love the benefactors of mankind; but is not your pure and fervent love to them all hatred, compared with your

esteem of, your delight in, him who is, in all these respects, "fairer than the fairest of the children of men?" To you he is precious, as "God and man in one person, and two distinct natures." In him ye see the glories of Deity mingling with the graces of humanity: he "is white" in the heavenly splendour of the Godhead: "he is ruddy" in the created beauties of manhood. Well may he be called "Wonderful;" for what more admirable, more past finding out, or more to be desired by men, than this mysterious union of the divine and human nature? There are no other works of God, great and marvellous as they are, to be compared with it,—there is none that can illustrate it. "The angels," that excel in mental strength, still "desire to look into it," unable, after an investigation of thousands of years, to penetrate its unfathomable depths of wisdom, and love, and power. But, incomprehensible as it is, is it not essential in the person of your Mediator and Redeemer? Who but Emmanuel could lay his hand on God and man, as days-man between them,—could have filled up the space, occasioned by sin, between the Creator and his offending creature,—could have sustained and exhausted the flame of divine wrath against sin? Is. lxiii. 1, xlii. 4. Who but Emmanuel could have contained all the mercy and all the grace necessary to the salvation of a redeemed world? Col. i. 19, ii. 9. Who but Emmanuel could have met all the necessities of guilty men, dead in tres-

passes and sins, and weak and imperfect in their best estate? And do ye not esteem him as a Saviour, whom ye can trust with all your concerns in time and eternity,—a Fountain of salvation, never to be exhausted by all the necessities of all his people,—God, whom ye adore, and man, whom ye love as your brother?

II. "Unto you who believe Christ is precious," for the sake of what he is to the Father and the Spirit. God, the Father, is the object of supreme love and gratitude to believers. For this cause ye value those next to him, who are most like and most dear to him. Christ is precious to you for the sake of what he is to the Father. Ye esteem him as the only begotten of the Father, John viii. 42; iii. 16; as the object of his supreme love, Prov. viii. 30; Col. i. 13; John i. 18; as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3; John xiv. 9; 2 Cor. iv. 6; and the partner of the Father in the covenant of grace, intrusted with the vindication of the government of God, and with the salvation of his people, Rom. iii. 25—27. Ye esteem him as his accredited servant, and his honoured representative, on whom he has put his name, Is. xlii. 2; with all whose proceedings in the execution of his offices the Father hath been well pleased, Matth. iii. 17; John xii. 28; and to whom, when he had finished his undertaking, he committed all power in heaven and in

earth, John iii. 35; Phil. ii. 6—11. Surveying his relation to the Father, and the Father's regard for him and delight in him, is it not your pleasure, as well as your indispensable duty, "to comply with the Father's will, and honour him as ye honour the Father?" John v. 20.

Christ is precious to you, as he is the grand object of the Holy Spirit's delight and concern. Ye cannot but value, believers, what the Holy Ghost esteems precious. Does not his official love and condescension to you, as your Sanctifier, entitle his estimate to your affectionate approbation? Ps. cxliii. 10. And is he not God who can best estimate the things of God? 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11; on whose judgment ye can most safely rely? How often have ye enumerated the instances of the Holy Spirit's deep interest in Jesus Christ? Hath he not formed his human frame? Luke i. 35; hath he not endowed him with his grace above measure? Is. xi. 2; John i. 32; iii. 34; hath he not always proportioned his grace to his varying, and increasing, and dying necessities? Heb. ix. xiv.; and hath he not become the great Agent of Christ, in governing the world, representing him in the church, and in accomplishing the salvation of his people? Acts ii. 33; Heb. ii. 4; Ps. cx. 4; 1 Pet. i. 5. And how highly does each of these expressions of the Spirit's regard to Jesus commend him to your esteem, and love, and veneration!

III. "Christ is precious unto you who believe,"

for the sake of his infinite love to sinners, in undertaking to redeem and save them. Since he is precious to you, on account of his own glories and the love of the Father and the Spirit to him; how much more precious must he be to you, for his own love to you, without which ye never could have loved him, the Father, or the Spirit? 1 John iv. 19; Gen. iii. 10. And what manner of love for you is this, that hath animated the bosom of Emmanuel? Is it not from of old for ever? Prov. viii. 30. Did it not induce him to undertake your otherwise desperate cause of his own accord, and with great delight? Ps. xl. 6; John x. 18. Did it not overcome the obstacles opposed by your character as enemies? Rom. viii. 9. Did it not surmount his difficulties, his natural repugnance to become your surety, your representative, your substitute, on whom all your sins were made to meet? Isa. liii. 6. Hath not his love for you subjected the Son of God to assume the infirm nature of man, and to become obedient to the law of which himself is the great Author? Gal. iv. 4. Hath it not subjected him to the curse of the law to which ye were liable? Gal. iii. 13. To what change can the love of him, who is himself unchangeable, be liable? Heb. xiii. 8. And will not he who loved you from the beginning, on a self-originating motion, love you unto the end? John xiii. 1. Does not the love of Christ pass all knowledge? Yet, is it not your heart's desire to comprehend it, as all the saints comprehend it?

And that ye may do this, is it not your prayer to be strengthened with might in the inner man? Eph. iii. 18, 19. But while ye are exerting your best efforts to measure the height and depth, the breadth and length of the love of Christ, do ye not feel its power constraining you with a holy irresistible violence to live to him who died for you? 2 Cor. v. 15.

IV. "Unto you who believe Christ is precious," for the suitableness and sufficiency of the offices which he executes as your Redeemer. Ye esteem him because he loved you, and became your surety, and this ye are bound in gratitude to do, even if his love had been unavailing. Much more precious must He be to you, convinced that his love is wise as fervent, and effectual as wise. How precious is Christ to you, for the suitableness of his offices to your condition! Ye naturally labour under spiritual darkness, under ignorance of God and his law, of yourselves and the way of salvation; and has not Christ come to make known to you all that is necessary to be known, in order to salvation by his word outwardly, and by his Spirit inwardly and effectually? Ye are, as men, subject to the curse of the broken law, and to the wrath of God, for your original sin and actual transgression; and has not Christ come and satisfied the demands of divine justice, and reconciled you to God, by his own offering, presented on the cross, and pleaded in heaven?

Ye are, as descendants of Adam, enemies to God in your hearts, slaves of sin and Satan, ever reclaiming their property even after it is lost; and hath not Christ come to subdue your rebellious hearts to the obedience of the just, to rescue you out of the hands of your spiritual tyrants, and to secure for you a safe entrance into his heavenly kingdom? Zech. ix. 9; Rom. xvi. 20; 1 Cor. xv. 56; Heb. vii. 25. Under what evil, then, do you labour, however complicated, inveterate, and seemingly hopeless, for which your Redeemer hath not a suitable remedy? Bring to him what plague you will, and he has a cure prepared for that very disease. Precious must He be to you, who has employed his divine knowledge and experience in studying your distempers, and in collecting and compounding medicines for them; but your esteem of him must be greatly raised by the sufficiency of his preparations. Of their efficacy what reasonable doubt can ye entertain, when ye seriously weigh the evidence of it? Is not God manifest in the flesh able to ensure the success of all he undertakes in each of his offices? Can the counsel of God, which hath determined to render them effectual, be disannulled? Prov. viii. 23. Is the covenant of grace, sealed with the blood of Christ, and ensuring their complete success, liable to be broken? Is Christ able to save to the uttermost, in consequence of pleading the accomplishment of that covenant on his part; and will not he save those for whose salvation he

laid down his life? And are there not myriads of witnesses of the sufficiency as well as suitableness of the offices of the Redeemer? Who begin before the throne on high the strain of glory to the Lamb that was slain, which angels take up, and which the universe re-echoes, but a multitude, that no man can number, who washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? And can ye tell how precious Christ is to you, who saves guilty souls from death, who heals all their spiritual maladies, and confers on them life everlasting?

V. "Unto you who believe Christ is precious," on account of the opposition given him by devils and wicked men. Devils oppose, insult, and war against Christ; unrenewed men enlist under their banners; yea, remaining corruption in the saints grievously abets the same impious cause. All this renders him more precious to you, believers. Ye esteem Christ to be precious, because angels adore, and love, and serve him, for they are patterns of truth and holiness, 1 Pet. i. 12; Heb. i. 7—14; Rev. v. 11—14. And does not your esteem of him acquire strength from the enmity to him of devils and wicked men, the avowed and injurious opposers of truth, morality, and godliness? Must ye not more firmly believe that the doctrine is true, the laws righteous, and the governor precious, whom Satan and his emissaries resist and assail, with combined wit and malice, force and fraud?

Is not your love increased, your indignation kindled, your sorrow excited, by the injurious treatment which he receives from the hands of such enemies, and all on your account? Wherever ye turn your eyes, do ye not see your Lord assailed by violence or treason? Here, his name and government are misrepresented, ridiculed, blasphemed. There, his gospel of peace is perverted into an instrument of strife, and hatred, and persecution. Here, the safety, and peace, and holiness of his loyal subjects are endangered by the power or the cunning of these dangerous foes. There, they usurp and tyrannize over a large portion of his rightful inheritance. And is not his righteous, his merciful Spirit vexed and grieved with proceedings so injurious to his cause, so ruinous to his enemies themselves, in the day of his vengeance? Contemplating this scene of horrid iniquity, do ye not adopt the language of David, in similar circumstances, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they kept not thy law?" And if I understand these tears, they say, "How precious is Christ, who suffers this unmerited abuse, and whose long suffering is salvation!"

VI. "Unto you who believe Christ is precious," for what he has done, for what he is doing, and for what he will do for you.

1*st*, He is precious to you for what he has done for you. He must be more precious to you when

known by experience, than when apprehended by faith alone; then the testimony of sense is added to the evidence of faith. And how sweet, and manifold, and marvellous is your experience of his grace, faithfulness, and power! Hath he not imparted to you, when spiritually dead and ignorant of your danger, spiritual life, and an alarming sense of your actual condition? Eph. ii. 3. Hath he not drawn you from that condition, and united you to himself by the cords of a man and the bands of love? Hos. xi. 4; John xii. 32. Hath he not taught you to approach the sin-pardoning God, under his protection, with humble hopes of acceptance? 1 John ii. 2; 1 Pet. iii. 18. Hath he not put his Spirit in you, and so written his law on your hearts, that it is your delight to study and obey it? Heb. viii. 10; Rom. vii. 12; Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Hath he not conferred on you the valuable privileges and something of the spirit of the children of the adoption through faith in his name? Gal. iv. 6. And, hath he not set your hearts on heaven, and inspired you with some animating hopes of it? Col. iii. 1, 2; 1 Pet. i. 3. "How precious are these favours!" How much more precious is he who purchased and hath bestowed them on us! Had he not interested me in himself, his personal glories, the love of the Father and of the Spirit to him, his own benignity in undertaking the salvation of sinners, the suitableness and efficacy of his offices, would only have aggravated my guilt, my condem-

nation, mine everlasting wretchedness. Love the Lord, then, O my soul, "for he hath brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings; and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."

2d, "Unto you who believe Christ is precious" for what he is now doing for you. The sense of past favours becomes weaker with time. Present favours press upon the senses, and preserve the remembrance of the past fresh in the mind. He who drew you into union with himself, prevents you from being drawn away from him by abounding temptations. His grace preserves for him the first place in your esteem, Phil. iii. 9, and your affectionate adherence to him as the Lord, your righteousness and your strength, John vi. 56. And O, how precious do ye experience him to be to you, thus cleaving to him! Is he not your true and living way to the gracious presence of the Father? John xiv. 6. Is he not the sure foundation of your peace, amid your unallowed infirmities, and of your safety amid your great and manifold dangers? Heb. x. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 6. Is he not your sweet and powerful bond of union with all that is great and good in earth and heaven,—with saints on earth and in heaven,—with angels and God himself? Col. i. 20. And, amid all your trials, is he not "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother?" Is he not a shepherd, under whose care ye want nothing

truly good for you, and need fear nothing truly evil?—Is he not your strong consolation in your bitterest sorrows? Heb. ii. 18. Is not Christ known and tried, "all your salvation, and all your desire?" 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

3d, "Unto you who believe Christ is precious" for what he shall be unto you. This hope enhances the preciousness of Christ believed in and tried. Ye walk in the valley of tears, which ends in the valley of death. How precious is Christ, who hath undertaken to conduct you in safety, in spiritual prosperity, through these dismal and dangerous regions! He will accompany you every step of your journey; he will make suitable provision for your every want, Psal. lxxxiv. 11; he will make all things work together for your good, Rom. viii. 28; he will prove your Almighty guardian, John x. 28; 1 Pet. i. 5; he will gradually make you meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, under his varied discipline and grace; he will be your resurrection and life, Phil. iii. 21; and your exceeding great and eternal reward. Of all this ye have such pledges as should silence every whisper of unbelief. Think of his promise, which is inviolable, Rev. i. 5; of his wisdom, which is unerring, Col. ii. 3; of his power, influencing all things in heaven and earth, Matt. xxviii. 18; Rev. i. 18; of his love, which is stronger than death, John xv. 9; and of his own and his Father's glory, which is the last end of all things, and which is to be infinitely illustrated by

the complete salvation of believers by Christ,—think seriously on all these things, and will ye not say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26.

1*st*, How happy are all those to whom Christ is precious! Is the mind of man happy in the pursuit and enjoyment of important truth? they to whom Christ is precious, examine and contemplate the most wonderful and glorious Truth—Emmanuel, the Redeemer and Saviour of sinners, 1 Kings x. 8; Zech. ix. 17. Is the heart of man happy in exercising its best affections on objects worthy of them? they are engaged in loving with all their heart, and soul, and strength, the most admirable and amiable of objects: "Jesus, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. And is the happiness of the human heart consummated in the reciprocal love of the beloved object? they enjoy the unspeakable security and bliss connected with the love and protection of their almighty, ever-living Friend, Song ii. 3, 5; Ps. xxiii. 4. "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love; I am satisfied with the goodness of his house."

2*d*, How precious is faith, and what an evil is unbelief! Faith proves and substantiates the glories and grace of Christ, Heb. xi. 1. Faith makes

Christ and all his excellencies, and all his blessings, the inviolable property of the believer, John i. 12; and faith conveys into the soul all the purity and love, all the joy and consolation that flow into the soul living upon him, Gal. ii. 20. Unbelief is the great instrument of Satan, to blind unhappy men to the glories of Christ, and to deprive them of the bliss connected with seeing him, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Unbelief gilds things seen and temporal, that it may conceal their native deformity and emptiness, and procure them a preference to things eternal. And, unbelief, by inducing to reject Christ, the unspeakable gift of God, subjects to his tremendous and eternal wrath, John iii. 36.

3d, Christ is precious to some, but is he precious to all of you? Is he, indeed, your only ground of hope towards an offended God? Are your thoughts of him frequent, and your meditations sweet? Is he more precious to you than all earthly good? Heb. xi. 6; Matth. x. 37; more precious than every other means of spiritual advantage, Phil. iii. 8; Prov. iii. 13—15; more precious than life itself, if his service require it? Acts xx. 24. Do ye regulate your esteem of all other persons and things by their relation to Christ? Do ye reverence the Spirit, as his gracious representative? John xvi. 17; Eph. iv. 30. Do ye love his people, and care for the poor, as the objects of his love and care? Ps. xvi. 2; Matth. xxv. 40. Are his ordinances and day very dear to you, as the memorials of his

love, and the means of communion with him? Luke xxii. 19; Rev. i. 10; Matth. xviii. 20. Do ye study and obey his commandments with delight, because this is a decisive evidence of your love to him? John xiv. 21; Luke vi. 46. Are the honour of his name, and the interests of his kingdom, considered as your own highest interest and honour? And do ye cherish a prevalent desire of greater, and nearer, and more full enjoyment of him?

4th, If Christ is not thus precious to you, which of those things that ye esteem precious can be compared with him? What beauty so great, so wonderful, as that of him who is "the fairest among ten thousand?" What honour so ennobling as that which he confers, who exalts a worm of the dust to sit with him on the imperial throne of heaven? Rom. xvi. 14; Is. xxv. 5; Luke ii. 32. What gain so profitable as he who makes all things the property of his people? 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. What pleasure so delightful as he who fills his believing people "with joy unspeakable and full of glory?" 1 Pet. i. 8. And what good so excellent, so suitable, so satisfactory, so eternal, as God over all, and blessed for ever, manifested in the flesh, as the portion of rational and immortal creatures? This is the foundation of human happiness laid by God; reject this Stone, stumble at it through unbelief, and ye will dash yourselves to pieces; or, falling on you, it will grind you to powder. Build on any other foundation, and, amid the storms of life, or

of divine wrath, it will slide from under you like sand, and your proud superstructure will bury you in its ruins, Matt. vii. 24, 27. Why not come and build on Christ, as the foundation laid by God? Why hath he laid it, but that sinners may build on it? Who hath ever come to him, and been rejected? How many have come, once distant, and graceless, and hopeless as any of you can be? And which of all these has not found him "the chief corner-stone, chosen of God, and precious?" If ye perish, your blood will be on your own head. Hear his words to you: "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."

5th, Is Christ less precious to some of you than he ought to be, and than you wish him to be? Are your views of his glories dim, your thoughts of him low, your love and zeal for him languid, your labours in his service slothful and unequal, and your sense of all these defects feeble and powerless? But is this a state which ye condemn, in which ye go mourning, from which ye desire and pray to be delivered? Then take the following directions: Turn away your eyes from those vanities that have alienated your heart, Ps. cxix. 37. Let them not remain always fixed on yourselves, lest ye sink into despair. Contemplate the excellency and fulness of Christ more frequently and more seriously, Heb. xii. 2. Prepare for and frequent his ordinances, in which his people see him "with open face as in a glass, and are changed into the same image, from

glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18, Ps. lxiii. 1. Commune one with another about him, in joy and in sorrow; and he may draw near and commune with you, till your hearts burn within you, Luke xxiv. 20, &c. Implore the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto you in their reality and beauty, John xvi. 14. Beseech Christ to manifest himself unto you in that other way than he does unto the world, and to increase your faith, Luke xvii. 5; and bring all your diseases, all your complaints unto him. Frequent communion with him, and frequent experience of his grace, and power, and faithfulness, will quicken your sense of his preciousness, and exalt him in your affectionate esteem. Amen and Amen!

SERMON VI.

JOHN xiv. 1—3.—"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

"MANY are the afflictions of the righteous, but at length the Lord delivereth him out of them all;" and while his servant journeyeth in this valley of tears, the same beneficent Master strengthens him with the bread and with the water of life; sometimes "fills him with peace and joy in believing," in the hope of this day of salvation.

The conduct of our Lord to his disciples, in that dread night in which he was betrayed, confirms the truth of these remarks. In that night their troubles were awfully increased. They were about to be separated from their beloved Lord in a most fearful manner. Darkness, black as the gloom of the grave, conceals futurity from their view, and augments their perplexity and dismay. In that dreadful night their troubles were increased; but in that same night Jesus appointed the sacrament of the Supper as a memorial and a pledge of his unalterable love, and revealed to them the mansions of bliss, secured

and opened up for them by his labours, as the most powerful means of supporting and comforting them.

This day, the conduct of Jesus to you, O believing communicants, confirms the truth of our observations. Your troubles may be many—may be great, and Jesus hath admitted you to the feast of reconciliation and love, of strength and comfort; and he hath been, he still is, raising your tearful eyes from the scenes of vexation and wo around you, and directing them to the glories of his own second coming. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come again:" "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

These words suggest the following animating truths,—that Christ prepares habitations of bliss for his people in another world,—and that this great truth, believed on his testimony, should preserve the Christian from sinful agitation amid the greatest troubles of life.

I. Christ prepares habitations of bliss for his faithful followers in another and better country.

Among heathen nations a future state of happiness was no more than the fanciful dream of the

poet, the probable conjecture of the sage, or the ardent desire of their more virtuous men. Under the Mosaic dispensation the people of God "looked for another and better, even an heavenly country." They looked towards this region of bliss, and obtained a pleasing, though imperfect, view of it, through the surrounding clouds and darkness. When our Lord sojourned upon earth, the shadowy darkness of the law was increased by the fogs of a pernicious tradition. His contemporaries no longer see the heavenly Canaan, like the paradise of God seen by the faint and shadowy light of the moon: they hear that "it consisteth of seven mansions, each of which is twelve thousand miles long, ten thousand broad, and as many in height." Most probably the disciples entertained the opinion of their countrymen on this subject. That he might not shock their prejudices, that he might enable them to distinguish between what is true and false in their former belief, our Lord "brings life and immortality to light" in the text. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it had not been so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Our Lord furnisheth us with the strongest arguments in proof of a future state of happiness, and presents us with the most interesting image of this felicity.

Christ presents men with the strongest arguments in favour of a future state of happiness, reserved for them, namely, his own veracity, as the teacher sent from God; and the sufficiency of the means employed by him to procure their admission into heaven. "If there had not been many mansions in my Father's house, I would have told you," saith he to his disciples, who already believed this truth. And what better evidence could be desired? The testimony of the Son is the testimony of God. He came from the bosom of the Father, and must be well acquainted with the Father's house. Truth eminently characterized his whole life and conduct on earth. Good-will to mankind in general, and to his disciples in particular, so illustriously shone forth in all he did, or suffered, or said, as to raise him far above the suspicion of his wishing to mislead them. In the near prospect of leaving them, nothing but truths, and truths of the utmost importance, would fall from his sacred lips. In a word, "he cannot lie:" "heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle of his word shall in nowise pass away."

That faith in his veracity may be strengthened, Christ states the sufficiency of the means he would employ to procure the admission of his followers into heaven. "I go to prepare a place for you." In these words the Lord not only mentions his own ability as a ground of faith in eternal life, but points out the adequate means he would take

to secure their enjoyment of it. He who undertakes this great work is the same who elsewhere shows that he is the appointed Saviour, the well-beloved Son of God, one with the Father. What promise of Emmanuel could fail? what undertaking of his prove unsuccessful? Yet Christ rests not on his own character; he hints at the evident fitness of the measures he was to adopt: "I go to prepare a place for you." Most probably he alludes to the following expressions: "And the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them," Num. x. 33. Undoubtedly the ark was an eminent type of our Lord; and two memorable movements of it before Israel, namely, when they first set out from Mount Horeb, and when they crossed Jordan, to enter into Canaan, beautifully prefigure our Lord's labours to procure our admission into heaven. These movements of the ark were made by divine appointment, to guide the Israelites, and to protect them in that way which leadeth into the promised land.

In like manner, Christ goeth before his people to prepare a place for them. He goeth before them, set forth as their propitiatory, as the cover of the ark, over against which the blood of atonement was sprinkled. The great obstruction to our entrance into heaven, nay, to our entrance on the path to heaven, is the divine justice armed against us, already subject to the penalties of the broken law.

But our propitiatory advanceth, God hath received the atonement, and we may draw near to God. "Christ hath suffered for sins, that he might bring us to God." The ark went before the children of Israel, not only to open up, but to show them the way; just so Christ leads his people to the way, and guides them in it. They are naturally ignorant of this path, and also averse from it. So far from desiring to go to God, they are enemies to him. By his word and example, rendered effectual by his Spirit, Christ openeth their eyes to see and their heart to love the path of life, which is the way of faith and holiness. Now, they acknowledge that "without faith no man can please God," that "without holiness no man shall see God." Now their prayer is, "fulfil in us the work of faith in Jesus Christ" with power; and their labour is, to "purify themselves." The ark went before the children of Israel to scatter their enemies, and to dry up Jordan, that they might pass in safety and take possession of Canaan; so Christ vanquisheth their enemies, and enables them to surmount all obstacles in their way to heaven. Satan, the world, and death oppose the passage of the spiritual Israel. So great is the power, malice, and ingenuity of these foes, that, unless they are subdued by Almighty power, the people of God must stop far short of heaven. This overthrow, essential to the happiness of his disciples, Jesus hath effected in going before them. "He

came to destroy the works of the devil;" "and, having spoiled the principalities and powers, and having made a show of them openly, he triumphed over them on the cross." He overcame the world, as his superiority over it evinced; and by his resurrection from the dead, he was "the plague of death and the destruction of the grave." By the resurrection of Christ, his followers "are begotten again to the lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. And his resurrection is the pattern of theirs. As Jesus unquestionably rose in the same body which he had animated before death, so they shall rise again in these very mortal bodies. Without this sameness there would be no resurrection; and that there is a resurrection the Scriptures every where affirm. Knowing the Scriptures and the power of God, we believe that it is not more impossible for these bodies, what changes soever they may undergo after death, to rise the same, than for them to continue the same through the longest life—though, it is asserted, every particle of them changes once in seven years. And the apostle explains how this body becomes meet for the celestial regions, when he says, "it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body—this corruptible shall put on incorruption." But where and how shall we find the mansions of bliss? Shall we inhabit some planet stored with celestial and unchangeable joys? Or, shall we unconfined glide from planet to planet,

without end increasing our knowledge of God in numberless systems, strengthening our intellectual powers, augmenting our divine affections and enjoyments, and swelling our songs of praise into more exalted strains? Where the ark rested, there the children of Israel also rested; so, where Christ is, there shall his disciples also be. This union is the end of all Christ's labours of love for his people, and of all his people's faith and hope, prayers and toils. Wherever this intimate and eternal union will take place, that is heaven; and it shall take place where the Majesty of Emmanuel blazeth forth in all the splendour of that glory which mortal eye cannot behold; but in which angels and saints shall for ever rejoice with veiled face or downcast eye. John xvii. 24. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." Where the glory of Christ shines, that is heaven. At the hour of death Jesus shall, by his Spirit and angels, meet the soul disengaged from its prison of clay; and, while it wonders and shrinks backward as it views the immense and trackless region frequented by spirits of darkness, he shall conduct it in safety, in brightening hope and joy, in celestial triumph, into this abode of glory, honour, and immortality. At the resurrection he shall lead the glorified assembly of raised or changed saints into the Father's more immediate presence. Through eternity he shall lead them from one of these countless fountains of pleasure to

another, that for evermore overflow within the immense sphere of heavenly glory. "He shall come and receive you to himself,"—he shall lead you into living fountains of waters, and "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Are not these sufficient proofs to you, O disciples of Christ, that mansions of bliss await the people of God in the invisible world? Christ pledges his veracity for this truth. Christ laid down his life as the price of your salvation, he took it up again, he pleads the merit of his death in heaven for your full enjoyment of the purchased inheritance, and employs the whole resources of his universal dominion that ye may in due time take possession of it. Without these, the arguments from natural religion are inconclusive; connected with these, they have much force. Indeed, it does not appear that unassisted reason discovered the sound arguments relating to God, man, and a future state, to be found in systems of natural religion; on the contrary, it is palpable that men borrowed them from revelation even at an early period, when it was known by tradition only, as well as since the Scriptures have been in their hands. How can we otherwise account for these arguments being always derived from a distant region connected with revealed religion, and not invented by those who transmitted them to the moderns, and for their being always more or less complete, as the Word of God was known? How shameless the ignorance, or the malice and dishonesty, which claim

them as inventions, which draw them up in battle array against revelation, whose servants they are, whose competitors they cannot be? These arguments may be used with propriety and success to show the subserviency of reason to revelation; and did time permit, I would here state them, resting on this foundation. At present I omit them to make a few observations on the nature of that place prepared by Christ for his followers.

This leads us to consider the interesting image of this felicity which our Lord delineates in the text. Lest the minds of his followers should lose themselves in the boundless region of fancy—lest they should be overpowered by the dazzling splendours of heaven, and receive no distinct and lasting impressions from its innumerable glories; Jesus speaks of it under a simple and familiar, a suitable and impressive figure, "In my Father's house are many mansions." What heart does not understand, and feel, and dwell with unspeakable pleasure on this figure? As we contemplate it, do we not grow young again,—do we not recall the purer joys of our paternal abodes in those days of security and lively enjoyment? and when we perceive they are departed to return no more, do we not strive to anticipate that blissful moment when we shall enjoy them, in the highest degree of perfection, in the house of our Father in heaven? And should it not greatly heighten this joy that this is our Father's house because he is Christ's Father? This leads us to expect that the

Father will extend the exquisite affection which he entertains for the Son to the friends and followers of the Son ;—this leads us to expect the presence, the guardianship, and blissful society of Jesus, our elder brother, in the house of his and of our Father.

There we shall enjoy the immediate presence of Deity and of all the family of God. God is every where present. Here " we see him darkly, as through a glass." In heaven " we shall see him face to face, and know him even as we are known." We shall there know God more intuitively, more completely ; and, though we cannot see God, we shall see his glory in the face of Jesus. Here the angels encamp around us unseen and unknown ; there, we shall literally " come" to them, see them as they excel in strength, become one of their exalted society, " be equal to them." The saints in heaven and earth have spiritual communion with one another, yet how are they strangers to each other ? In heaven we shall come to the city of the living God, shall become fellow-citizens of all " the spirits of just men made perfect," enjoy with them the same privileges, engage with them in the same exercises, and maintain with them an edifying, and intimate, and delightful intercourse.

In the house of our Father in heaven all our wants shall be supplied. A good father studies, though often without success, to procure what promotes the ease and happiness of his children. God is not only willing but able to remove all suffering

at a distance from them, and to bestow whatever is truly good on them in heaven. "In him all fulness dwelleth."—"He taketh pleasure in the prosperity of his people," even on earth the place of their discipline; how much more in Zion above, where they come to receive the rewards of faith and love? And hath he not engaged to Jesus Christ to admit them into "the joy of the Lord?" With this life all our wants shall end. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

When we arrive in heaven, our affections and services shall perfectly accord with the will of God. Our understanding shall then discern the truth, without prejudice or imperfection. Our hearts being "holy as he who hath called us is holy," shall receive and cherish the dictates of the understanding. There no temptation can present itself, —the example of saints and angels must excite to imitation and the contemplation of God, "the beauty of holiness" shall transform into his own glorious image. Then shall we experimentally know "the fulfilment of the law," pure and fervent love to God, and angels, and men.

A father's house on earth is the permanent abode of his children; so heaven is the mansion of the saints in glory. They are men in attainments; but they are "little children" in humility and meekness, in teachableness and affectionate dependence

on their heavenly Father. Their happiness is inseparable from the light of his countenance, the accents of his love, the counsels of his wisdom, and the support and bounties of his own hand. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," and therefore "they shall go no more out." Rev. iii. 12.

In the house of an affluent father on earth there are various apartments for his numerous children; so in heaven "there are many mansions." In a family there is a free intercourse betwixt all the members of it, the talents and happiness of each contribute to the improvement and happiness of the whole; yet there are associations of a more intimate kind, formed by similarity of capacities and acquirements, by similarity of taste and temper; and what more probable than that something similar to this takes place in heaven? Does it not already subsist among angels; and is not the assembly of the saints to be "like unto the angels?" Is not God declaring this in his word, and preparing the saints on earth for it by his grace? Shall not they who have gained ten, or five, or two talents, receive corresponding distinctions, and associate with their equals? If there be at the resurrection some glorious as the sun, others as the moon, others as the stars; shall not each of these luminaries shine in its proper sphere? This neither detracts from the merit of Christ, nor deviates from the plan here begun, nor supposeth any defect in the happiness of the least in the kingdom of God. Like the vessels

of gold in a great man's house, some may contain more, some less; but all are full. Are not different capacities of serving and enjoying God possessed by the subjects of the kingdom of grace; and is not the kingdom of grace the beginning of a great scheme to be continued and improved in the kingdom of glory? Christ hath purchased both grace and glory for his people. If it be no detraction from the merit of Christ (and certainly it is not alleged) that different degrees of grace are bestowed on the saints in this life; how can it be any, that different associations and degrees of glory shall be assigned to the saints in heaven? Let us then recall the dispositions and tastes, the pursuits and attainments of our friends who have fallen asleep in Jesus; and we may obtain a glimpse of their present society, their present occupations and enjoyments.

Lastly, "many mansions" lead us to expect not only different employments and degrees of felicity in heaven, but also a regular and progressive improvement. Thus it is in the house of a father on earth. The child becomes a youth,—a man, more mature in years, and knowledge, and experience, and passeth to the apartments allotted to these steps of his progress. Just so it is in heaven. The Christian's first step into the invisible world carries him farther in his spiritual course than all the weary steps he took on earth. With an invigorated sight, he reaches an eminence in an unclouded sky, whence he descries the works of God, not dim and confused,

but spread around in all the varied tints of beauty, —in all the charms of harmony,—in all the grandeur of a boundless expanse. What bounds can we fix to his progress? Is he not capable of receiving endless information? Will not his other powers and faculties keep pace with his understanding? Are not the means of improvement innumerable? Is not God, to whom he gradually acquires a nearer resemblance, infinite in excellence? And does not this endless progress reflect the highest honour on the power, and wisdom, and goodness of God, enabling a worm of the earth thus to shine in their own divine lustre? Does it not present a sublime image of our heavenly improvement, eternally approaching God, the model of it; and of God's inconceivable excellence, eternally approached, and still at an infinite distance beyond the closest imitation of it?

These are the truths which our Lord set before his sorrowful disciples, as best calculated to comfort them. They were about to be separated from him, to be exposed to all the heart-rendings connected with his suffering and death, and to all the obloquy, persecution, torments, and murder, connected with their publishing the Gospel of Jesus. To all this, He, who knows the heart of man, simply opposeth, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."

These words are addressed not only to the immediate followers of our Lord, but to as many as believe in God, and also in Jesus. They are addressed

to all of you who are habitually coming to God through Christ Jesus,—through the way of faith in him, as "loving you, and giving himself for you;" and of holiness, "doing whatsoever ye do unto the glory of God." These are the characters imprinted on his disciples by the Holy Spirit, and to all who possess them.

II. Ought these doctrines to administer strong consolation in their greatest troubles. Volumes could not apply this consolation to the various circumstances of the afflicted followers of Christ. Your time does not permit me to be minute, and your serious meditation on this subject, when you retire, will render even a few hints profitable.

1*st*, This subject is fitted to dispel the Christian's fears of falling short of heaven. Did heaven depend on my perfect holiness here, or on my present strength, then I must bid farewell to heaven. How strong are the corruptions of this deceitful and desperately wicked heart, after years of prayers, and tears, and painful labours! How powerful are the spiritual foes with whom I must contend,—or rather before whom I am likely to fall! But, is it not to the house of Christ's Father I desire to go? Is it not to the place which Christ hath prepared for believers, and for which he will prepare believers? Though I dare not pray, "Increase my faith in Christ," yet, have I not often cried, with tears in mine eyes, "Lord, help mine unbelief?" And

may I not look to the unchangeable nature of the covenant of grace,—to the everlasting love of the Father to his Son,—to the all-sufficiency of him whom I would fondly call my Saviour; may I not look to all these as securities for my being sanctified and kept through faith unto eternal life? O, for that vigorous faith, enabling me to say with the blessed apostle, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. i. 12.

2d, This subject comforts amid all the painful labours, "to be holy in heart," and in all manner of conversation. To be like God is the Christian's constant aim. Who knows the pains and labours which it costs him to "lay aside one sin that doth easily beset him;" or the long and hard-fought conflicts he must maintain before he is clothed with one ornament of the "new creature?" Who knows the number of his sighs, and groans, and tears, on account of remaining imperfection and sin? Are there not moments when he is ready to faint,—to give up the struggle as fruitless? But doth not one glimpse of heaven comfort his desponding heart? "I see the place where I shall have no more labouring, and combating, and fainting; where I shall attain the summit of my wishes—perfect holiness. This prospect consoles for all my past labours; and the degrees of bliss in heaven inspire with the noblest ambition; they double my diligence, that I may in

due time enter into the mansions of glory, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob—with the most honoured in the kingdom of heaven." Ps. lxiii. 1, 2.

3d, This subject comforts the Christian troubled on account of his imperfect enjoyment of God on earth. The Christian walks with God; yet how must even the lawful avocations of life divert the thoughts from God! How difficult to realize the presence of Deity, when we return from worldly pursuits and conversations! How dark our views of him, how cold our affections, in many of our approaches to God! And when, by the distinguishing favour of God, we have been translated to the gate, —some into the third heaven,—and seen and heard things unutterable, how short the period of this beatific vision; how soon must we return to the ordinary affairs,—to the vanities, and perplexities, and sorrows of life! The grief of many hearts, because they cannot remain at the table or even in the house of God, is at this moment bearing testimony to this affecting truth. Christians, you must return to the world, and to your ordinary duties in it. Bless God, that, from time to time, agreeably to your experience this day, he holds communion with you, to support you, and to give you some foretaste of that fellowship to which he will admit you in heaven. Rejoice in the prospect of seeing God, without a veil between; of being engaged in his service without interruption, as without defect;

and of receiving the testimonies of his ineffable love from his own hand.

4th, This subject comforts the Christian troubled by the state of society in the visible church. The godly man is not to go out of the world. While he mingles with it in the necessary intercourse of life, he must often weep, "because multitudes keep not the law of God." In heaven these tears shall be dried up, for the spirit of obedience to the Most High shall animate all the inhabitants. Here, the temper of Christians, and their party views and interests, often keep them at a distance from each other, cause them to meet with jealousy and distrust, and sometimes altogether blind them to the true character of each other. In heaven, defects of temper shall be cured, party spirit shall be extinguished, except so far as it shall provoke to love with excellence; and saints shall dwell together in union and happiness, rejoicing in their mutual acquaintance and friendship. Here, we think with admiration of eminent saints of distant ages or climes; hereafter, our desire to see, perhaps to learn from them, shall be gratified. How transporting the thought of meeting with Moses, and Enoch, and Elias; with David, and Solomon, and Isaiah; with Peter, and James, and John; above all, with the man Jesus—here, the foundation of our hope—there, the centre of union, the source of delight, the author of glory! How transporting to see the hand, once nailed to the cross for our sins, stretching forth

the golden sceptre to a redeemed world; to see that smile which constitutes the bliss of all we love; to hear those accents from his lips which fill the heavenly hosts with eternal rapture!

5th, This subject consoles those troubled by the toils and disappointments of industry, or by the sickness and depression of spirit, to which they are here liable. "All is the gift of God, and the fruit of industry." This honest exertion is most healthful for the body and the mind. But how often is it unavailing, as it is painful? In heaven, this bodily and mental toil shall cease. The body shall feel no hunger or thirst, and study shall nourish, and not exhaust, the strength and cheerfulness. Here, sickness and pain rack the babe, and consume its short period in unavailing cries; wither the bloom, and prostrate the strength, of youth; and aggravate the evils of old age. In heaven, a spiritual, an incorruptible body, will for ever exhibit the pleasing tokens of youth immortal, of health and vigour unimpaired. Here, "a sorrowful spirit renders the unhappy sufferer insensible of every surrounding mercy, and adds inexpressibly to the weight of every other burden." In heaven, the infirmities, the temptations, which clouded the understanding, which obscured the cheering face of the God of all grace and consolation, shall disappear like the phantoms of a feverish dream. "They shall see God face to face;" "and in his presence

there is fulness of joy; at his right hand are pleasures for evermore."

6*th*, and lastly, This subject consoles the Christian troubled by the many and painful separations to which he is liable on earth. We must separate from the world; but what is the world, with all its honours and enjoyments, compared with "the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away?" We must separate from this body, our familiar and cherished companion; but for how long? for what purpose? Only during the period of its calm repose, its undisturbed sleep in the grave; only until it is fitted to rejoin the soul in a state meet for heaven, where it shall no longer fetter the understanding, or debase the affections; when it shall no more grieve us by their deformity, weakness, or pain; when it shall be "a spiritual and incorruptible body," qualified to aid, to co-operate with, the glorified spirit in all its sublime contemplations, in all its rapturous acts of devotion, in all its rapid flights to fulfil the commands of God. We must separate from our beloved and living friends. One goes to the eastern, another to the western, world. They must suffer all the anxiety and sorrow occasioned by distance, by hardship, by danger, spiritual and temporal; and all these to be encountered far from our presence, our counsel, or assistance. Few friends spend their lives together; almost not two in the same house. If they did,

they must separate at death, when time, intimacy, and habit, have strengthened and drawn more close the silken cords of friendship. "When such friends part, it is the survivor dies." Thus we may often die while we remain on earth. But let us "not sorrow as those who are without hope," for any of our friends in Christ who have been removed even from a father's house on earth. They have gone to happier mansions; they are blest in the way in which they are most capable of being blest; they are under the roof, under the eye, in the full enjoyment of the love of their and our Father in heaven. Let us mingle joy with our tears, that fall in compliance with the will of God to afflict us, as a tribute to the memory of the beloved and departed, as an expression of our sorrow for our own severe loss, and for sin, the cause of our loss. With these plentiful streams of bitterness let us mingle the joy of the hope that our separation is but temporary. If we be followers of Christ, we shall, in due time, meet with them, distinguish them, and be distinguished by them, from the myriads that surround the throne of the Lamb; and, if suitable society for each other, be for ever most intimately associated in his Father's house. No more shall the pain of absence, the tear of separation, or anxiety for mutual safety, trouble our bosoms. No more shall infirmity or sin pollute the stream of our affections, weaken our endeavours to seek and pursue the good of each other, or render our intercourse for a moment unworthy

of rational and redeemed, of renewed and immortal, spirits. All that we believed concerning our Father's house, and the social blessedness in it, on the testimony of Jesus, shall be seen; all that we thus hoped for shall be enjoyed, and celebrated for ever. The enjoyment shall be the pure uninterrupted stream of pleasure that flows from God, the inexhaustible fountain of happiness. The song of praise shall be, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

But have all present a title to these words of strong consolation? Alas, among twelve apostles one had a devil! Is there but one among you (a much greater number) who has not a lawful claim to these consolations, I would address that one, and say, What fearful things does this text speak to you, for it speaks the very reverse of all that it says to believers! You believe not in God, so as to come to him,—you believe not in Christ, so as to come to God through him, so as to do all in word or in deed habitually in the name of Christ, unto the Father. Whatever your form of religion, whatever your character among men, you are not living to God by faith in his Son, which worketh by love. Consider your condition, I entreat you. You may be young, but you will become old. You are in easy circumstances, but you may soon become poor. You are in good repute among kind friends, but

your reputation may be blasted, and your friends die, or become indifferent or inimical. You enjoy health and strength, but what security is this for continued health, or prolonged life, and how soon may you be numbered among the sick and the dying. And does not the text say to you who do not seriously believe in God and in his Christ, "Let your heart be troubled" amid these prospects, these afflicting vicissitudes; for Christ has gone away, and gone away to prepare a place for you, but not in his Father's house. He hath the keys of death and of hell, where, too, there are many mansions, —where each is peopled with evil spirits and the children of the devil, in wo inconceivable and irremediable. Let your heart be troubled, for Christ will come; and while he opens the portals of the palace of heaven to the faithful, will he throw wide the gates of hell for your entrance, will he shut, and no one can open. Do I speak these things merely to alarm you, to enervate, to plunge into utter despair? Knowing the terrors of the Lord, I would persuade you to flee from the wrath to come. How do the Scriptures co-operate in encouraging you to be reconciled to God by Christ? Have ye not heard that with God there is forgiveness, that he may be feared—that to as many as believe he giveth power to become the sons of God—that they who seek God, their hearts rejoice continually? Seek the Lord while he is near; call on him while he is to be found. Then will Christ address the words

of our text even to you, " Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Amen.

SERMON VII.

REV. vii. 13—17.—" And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

THE church on earth is an image, and in its happier days, a very lively image, of heaven. Sometimes Zion below is described in such glowing terms as, strictly speaking, belong only to Zion above. Such a description combining with other circumstances, will account for the representation of heaven being occasionally taken for a delineation of the church in its greatest prosperity. Hence, the passage before us has by some been considered as descriptive of the church in the days of Constantine. Then she had " come out of great tribulations," and she enjoyed great peace and privileges; but did her spiritual correspond to her temporal prosperity, which undoubtedly became a great snare unto her? Does

not this scene far more emphatically represent the case of those multitudes who had been faithful unto death, amid the harassing persecutions of the former ages? And is not "the language of these verses so energetic, that nothing short of heavenly felicity can answer to it?" I consider the passage to be a description of heaven, as exhibited to the beloved disciple in a divine vision.

In it John saw an innumerable multitude gathered from all the nations of the earth known in these days, "standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," and he heard the song of praise and triumph; he saw the living creatures and the elders, these representatives of the universal church, encircling this band of the redeemed who were next to the throne; and he witnessed the humility, the charity, the devotion of the angels, who stood without this second circle, and "who, in prostrate adoration, added their cordial amen to the praises rendered to God and the Lamb."

To excite the attention of the apostle, to remind us that even an apostle needs heavenly instruction as he studies the revelation of God, and to promote the comfort of himself and all afflicted, especially all persecuted Christians, one of the elders said unto him, "What are these who are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" Willing to learn, and grateful to his heavenly instructor, John respectfully replied, "Sir, thou knowest." On this

the elder informs him who these persons are, and whence they come, describing them, 1*st*, By their past, and 2*d*, By their present, connected with their future, state.—Let us follow this order.

I. The elder describes these inhabitants of heaven by their past state,—by their past sufferings,—and their past means of seeking deliverance from all their evils, and preparation for their present honour and blessedness.

" These are they who came out of great tribulation," " great" straits, afflictions, persecutions, said the elder. Tribulations include all the sufferings to which, as men or Christians, we are exposed. The faithful who died before the accession of Constantine were subject to them all in their greatest severity. While they struggled with poverty, or languished under sickness, they were often destitute of the greatest earthly comfort; in such circumstances, they were often exposed to the greatest additional earthly sorrows. Instead of receiving the consolation and support of friends and relatives in prosperity, they often found them involved in the same distress,—they sometimes found them among the bitterest of their enemies; they had to weep over them, torn from them by exile or death; or they had with deeper anguish to lament their spiritual poverty and enslaved state,—their spiritual maladies and death, in the service of heathen idols. Often did they undergo the " trials of cruel mock-

ings,"—not unfrequently the scourge of the persecutor, the horrors of prison, the agonies of the stake, and the flames of martyrdom. Satan was not satisfied with stirring up the inhuman to harass, and torture, and kill them; he sought, and sometimes succeeded, to plunge them into depths of distress; one while by the feigned smiles of "an angel of truth," another while by the more natural and terrible roarings of a devouring lion. And what affected them more than all outward sufferings, was sin, at first "ruling over them;" and even when his power was broken, still "dwelling in them" in some degree—still "easily besetting them," and, in some instances, "prevailing against them." On account of sin they felt the stings of conscience, the stripes of chastisement, the apprehensions of wrath, "the arrows of the Almighty, the poison whereof drunk up their spirit."

How came they forth from these tribulations, and came forth "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light?" How came they off conquerors of these foes to Christian purity and progress heavenward? Tribulations are fitted to convince the candid and inquiring mind of infirmity and sin; but even then they are in nowise fitted to enable the convinced person duly to desire or successfully to triumph over sin. When tribulations are occasioned by the Christian profession, they tend to alienate the heart from the gospel, the very means of deliverance

from sin. Hence, not a few "despise the chastenings of the Lord," or faint when they are rebuked of him; some, "who had received the word with joy, when tribulation or persecution arose because of it, by and by "become offended." By what means, then, did those clothed in white robes, standing around the throne, come forth with such safety and honour?

The elder informed John, that "they had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." These robes must have been something belonging to the persons—something apparent as garments, which had once been impure; and which had, by suitable means, been made and preserved white, while liable to defilement in the world. This cannot be Christ, or the righteousness of Christ, which is sometimes represented as the apparel of the faithful. Outward actions, together with their principles, are frequently spoken of as robes in Scripture. God is said to be "clothed with light," or holiness; to be girt about with strength and righteousness; and men are said to be "covered with their works;" their "righteousnesses are" called "filthy rags;" and "their conscience," likened to the robe of the mind, and representing it, is set forth as "defiled." The natural man wears defiled apparel, descending to him by inheritance,—apparel still farther polluted by himself,—apparel rendering him unfit for God's presence, and obnoxious to his wrath. "The Church," on the other hand, "is

arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; and the fine linen is the righteousnesses," *i. e.* the righteous dispositions and "acts of the saints." These "beautiful garments" are not those of "the uncircumcised and unclean," but of those whose "conscience is purged from dead works;" who have "put on righteousness and true holiness;" who are clothed in garments "white as snow and as wool;" serving God as "a royal priesthood," subduing sin and offering continually the "sacrifices of righteousness." And the means of this purification is, "the blood of the Lamb."—"The Lamb of God" is the pure, "meek, and lowly" Son of God, become the representative of his people in our nature; and "his blood" is his perfect obedience unto death, offered on the cross, and presented in heaven as the appointed sacrifice for their sins,—the appointed satisfaction for their guilt,—the appointed procuring cause of their acceptance with God as righteous, and so entitled to the reward of perfect obedience,—and the appointed procuring cause of the mission of the Holy Ghost to interest in its merits, and render holy in heart and life by its virtues. This is "the Fountain for sins and for uncleannesses,"—"broken open on the cross, set open on the day of Pentecost, and left open to all generations, flowing in the channel of the word to all the ends of the earth." It consisteth of blood and of water, as John testifies, chap. xix. 34, 35, and 1 John v. 6, and "washeth" men the most unholy, *i. e.* "justifieth and sanctifieth" them, when

the Spirit, by "means of the word, sacrament, and prayer," "persuades and enables" them to have recourse to its cleansing efficacy; in other words, to "wash their robes, and make them white in it." 1 Cor. vi. 11.

This is what these inhabitants of heaven had, by the Holy Spirit, been enabled to do, during their warfare on earth. They had been convinced that "they were by nature children of wrath, even as others;" that they had "in all things sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" that "the wages of sin is death;" and that, without a perfect atonement, or without a new nature, productive of a holy life, they could not have fellowship with God, "who hath taught from the beginning," "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin," and "without holiness no man shall see God." Under such alarming convictions, they could not remain quiet in this state, they could not pacify their conscience "with the blood of bulls and of goats," which, as God declares, "cannot take away sin;" nor by imperfect amendment, nor by the blood of martyrdom, which could not compensate for past guilt, and which have stains to be washed away. When heaven and earth presented no suitable remedy, save that graciously offered by God, they fled to this fountain, formed on Calvary, and in it "they washed their robes." They believed in the efficacy of "the blood of the Lamb," they vehemently desired to experience its power, they implored the Spirit

for "the effectual application of it," they bathed in it, they waited for its influence, and, in due time, found, to their unspeakable delight, that their "conscience was purged" with a blood which extracts every stain of guilt, and furnisheth with a perfect righteousness and peace, Rom. viii. 33, 34. They saw that the law was satisfied, as to its penal demands, the wrath of God appeased, the mouth of hell shut as to them, and the doors of heaven thrown wide open. This peace of conscience might not be obtained at once, and might not be constantly enjoyed through life; but they had daily recourse to "the blood of the Lamb;" and, on extraordinary occasions, they had recourse to it with extraordinary solemnity. To them it was the blood of the morning and evening sacrifice, it was the blood of the Paschal Lamb, it was the blood of the solemn expiation on a great day of atonement.

To be delivered from wrath, to be accepted of God, and to have a claim to heaven, was not their only desire; they felt that a meetness to commune with God, the source of purity and bliss, that a meetness for heaven, that a new and divine nature, producing a new and holy life, were necessary; that "without being born again of the Spirit, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven." These deep and practical convictions and desires were the beginning of this very life, and washing in the blood of Christ was the establishment of it unto the perfection of holiness. Having been immersed in "this

fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," they came forth, "cleansed from all sin," as to obligation to punishment, and endued with the inextinguishable principle of a holy life; they came forth with the likeness of God in every feature, as little children, to advance "to the fulness of the measure of the stature of perfect persons in Christ."—"Their conscience was purged from dead works, to serve the living God."—"They drew near to him with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith, having their heart purified from an evil conscience, and their body washed as with pure water." Clothed in white, as a sanctified priesthood, "they presented the sacrifices of prayer and praise, and of doing good and communicating, with which God was well pleased." As kings, they triumphed over inward corruption, over the world, and over Satan; and "they overcame by the blood of the Lamb." All the purity, and strength, and consolation of "the life which they lived in the flesh," were derived through faith in this wondrous blood. By it they overcame the sense and apprehension of divine wrath, and acquired boldness towards God; they rose superior to the most formidable dangers in duty; they enjoyed assurance of victory, even when they fell under the stroke of the executioner; and by it they excited their desires, with their most triumphant expectations, of eternal communion with the Lord. Rom. viii. 33—38.

II. The elder describes these inhabitants of heaven by their present connected with their future state; and, in introducing this description, he points out what connects these with their former state.

"They washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" therefore they are now so happily situated, and shall continue in this blessed condition. They believed that "the blood of the Lamb was precious," as God stated it to be; and they had been "accepted in the Beloved,"—they had "received an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith,"—they had "put off their filthy garments, and been clothed with a change of raiment," as an holy priesthood unto God,—"they had come out of great tribulations," having "overcome by the blood of the Lamb," and therefore is "given unto them a crown of life."—"The blood of the Lamb" is the price of their inheritance, and applied by the Spirit through faith, is the means of becoming meet for it; while the degree of their glory and honour is proportioned to their "works of faith and labours of love."

"They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple."—"They stand before the throne" as accepted worshippers, as distinguished favourites of the king of kings, admitted nearer than angels themselves—"and before the Lamb" seated

on the same throne, as redeemed, and made thus victorious by him. There they stand in their office of royal priests, clothed with garments shining as the light, though they had been as crimson and scarlet, and bearing palms in their hands, in token of their triumph and permanent peace. Like their blessed master, they appeared on earth without comeliness, and seemed "stricken and smitten of God, and afflicted;" but, "having suffered with him, they now reign with him," invested with his honour, and glory, and beauty. The toil and imperfection of service are at an end, for "they have ceased from all their labours;" but their service is more suitable to God, is incessant, and ever delightful. "They serve him day and night in his temple." "There is no night" in heaven, and "there is no need of the sun to shine, for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb," the Sun of righteousness, "is the light thereof." Not only at the time when they were wont to exhaust their strength in labour, but at the time when they were wont to recruit their weary powers with sleep, or seek it in vain under the restless fever of body or mind, at the time when the Levitical priesthood relieved each other by successive orders of their brethren, they now, without alternate rest and exercise, "serve God day and night." The beams of the Sun of righteousness convey a light and love,—a strength and joy, eternally recreating, invigorating, and enlarging both the capacity and enjoyment of this service. Various are

their services, and suited to their tastes and attainments; but they are all expressive of the affections and sentiments intimated by the language of their solemn song of praise. "Salvation to our God, who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb." With what exultation do they lead in a song in which angels rejoice to follow, and add their cordial amen!

These services are too exalted to be performed in any the most magnificent temple made with hands, or in the grander temple of nature, of which the starry heavens form the shining arch; they are performed in that inconceivably immense and splendid temple formed by the essential glory of Deity, enclosing the whole region of bliss with "walls like unto pure gold, clear as glass," Rev. xxi. 22, the sensible glory of which is "the Lamb of God," "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Their future shall correspond to their present state. "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among," or rather tabernacle over, "them." Deity, as by the canopy of cloud over the Israelites in the wilderness, will signify his high, intimate, endearing relation to them—will remind them of the bondage from which he delivered them, and that he did deliver them that he might dwell among them, Exod. xxix. 45, 46,—will "over all their glory create a defence" against all evil; and assure them that he will never leave nor forsake them, 1 Kings vi. 13. They shall learn to understand the Son of God—they shall see clearly what the sins and suf-

ferings of time, what the doubts and fears of unbelief, often wrapped in thick clouds—they shall see clearly their union with God and their safety in him, and they shall experience the joy of this full discovery, succeeding their former tribulations with a double relish, as it is the end of Christ's humiliation and exaltation, " that the Lord God might tabernacle among men," Ps. lxviii. 18.

Their happiness shall be suited to the immediate presence and protection of God, and the rest of the vision of this blessedness is an emblem conformed to the typical felicity of Israel in the land of Canaan, where God manifested a still more gracious presence than in the wilderness, " pitching a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from the storm and from the rain," Is. iv. 6.

Therefore, the elder saith, " They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." God sometimes visits his people in this world with hunger and thirst, and the want of almost all earthly comfort; and this is no violation of his promise, that " their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure;" because the want shall be made better for them than " the fulness of bread." Nevertheless the scarcity, and especially the want of bread, aggravated, as it often is, by other sufferings, is very grievous—to an extent which those only can justly imagine who have felt the gnawings of hunger and the burnings of thirst—who have felt the

still greater anguish occasioned by " their little ones crying for bread when they have none to give them." This takes place more frequently under persecution, when the sufferers are driven from home, or lie neglected in prison, as the faithful here prophesied of did many times. How pleasant must heaven be to them, where they shall no more endure such painful privation—where earthly sustenance shall not be necessary—where the just shall be equal to the angels even in these respects! In a higher sense, the people of God hunger and thirst for spiritual blessings in this life: in heaven they experience the sweet accomplishment of their Lord's promise, they are " filled." With all the acute sufferings and restlessness of desire—with all the incapacity of being satisfied with any thing else, and with all the labour and eagerness of those perishing with hunger—they sought spiritual blessings; and they obtained so much of them as preserved spiritual life, as satisfied them with the suitableness but not with the measure of the nourishment. Full as their repasts on earth sometimes were, these only made them feel the anguish of occasional scarcity more severely; these made them aspire at " the goodness of God's" heavenly " house" more vehemently. Arrived there, no more shall their " flesh long, and their souls thirst" for communion with God in ordinances—no more shall their " souls be parched as thirsty land" for divine consolations—no more shall they, as " poor and needy, seek water and find none,

and their tongue fail of thirst." They have eaten of " the bread that cometh down from heaven, and which endureth unto eternal life." They have drunk of the water which Christ gave them, and it is in them " a well of water springing up unto eternal life." They have reached that happy land where God's promise receives its full accomplishment, Isa. xlix. 10.

Freed from inward wants, they are for ever delivered from outward troubles; " neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." What a blessing to the labourer, who hath toiled under the scorching beams of an equinoctial sun—to the persecuted exile, who hath fainted under the blaze of an eastern noon, who hath seen his fellow-traveller fall dead by his side when " the sun did smite him!" But how much greater a blessing to those " upon whom the sun" of trials " hath risen with burning heat," till they became " black" in the eyes of others, till " all their earthly glory withered as the flower of the grass, and the grace of the fashion of it perished!" How much greater a blessing to those who " endure" under the sun of persecutions, which has " scorched" other professing Christians so that " they withered!" How much more blessed are those for whom it pleased God to " prepare a vehement east wind, and cause the sun" of chastisement " to beat on their head, that they fainted and wished in themselves to die?" Had not " a man been to them as a cover from the tempest, and as

the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,"—they, too, would have been " offended," they would have " turned back," they would have " perished from the way:" but Emmanuel was to them " as the shadow of a great rock," from time to time, in a remarkable manner,—hence, they " went from strength to strength, till they appeared in Zion," where neither shall " the sun light on them, nor any heat."

The reason assigned for their being delivered from all evil, and possessed of all good in heaven for ever, is the care of the Redeemer over them. " For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters." Emmanuel shall appear to them as " the Lamb of God," pure, " meek, and lowly"—as " the Lamb that had been slain" " to take away the sins of the world," but now liveth, and is alive for evermore, " to save to the uttermost all those who come to God through him"—as " the Lamb," usually " in the midst of the throne," " who had overcome, and had now sat down on his Father's throne," " having all power in heaven and earth"—as " the Lamb" having " seven eyes" to inspect his government with the minutest attention, and to send forth all manner of spiritual influences to secure the ends of his sway. This glorious Person condescends to assume anew, and in its highest perfection, his well-known office of shepherd to them. On earth, they sometimes had reason to lament his

absence, as to their perceptions; or to tremble, as they viewed him under the form of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah;" but in heaven they shall for ever perceive his gracious presence, and power, and redeeming love in exercise for their happiness and improvement. "He shall feed them" with the knowledge which is "the bread of life"—with that knowledge of God, who is the everlasting portion of the soul, as manifested in his essential glory, unveiled in the works of creation and providence, and especially in the person, offices, and works of the Lamb himself. Under his guidance on earth the simplest among them knew what was sufficient unto salvation; the most profound knew little compared with what is revealed on their entrance into heaven; and even the spirits, "who excel in strength," are but babes in knowledge compared with what they shall become under the tuition of the Lord in glory. Through eternity he shall unfold new wonders, remove all that obstructs vision or distracts attention, strengthen the intellectual and bodily eye, and whet their spiritual appetite.

And, while he feeds them, "he shall also lead them unto living fountains of waters;" to God, from whom they had once departed, but towards whom they have been gradually returning since conversion. He is the inexhaustible source of all consolation; and, as he hath life in himself, so he shall continue progressively to communicate life with all its capacity of exalted acquirement, exercise, and

enjoyment, and with all that can eternally recreate and delight. Well may we exclaim with David, Ps. xxxvi. 7, 8, 9, "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life."

The elder concludes the description, saying, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Heaven could occasion no tears save tears of joy; and did such drops fill the celestial eye, they would be permitted to remain, expressing the divine sensibility from which they flow,—and sweetly reflecting in ten thousand varying colours the light of that sun of love which sheds its glories around them, to the delight of saints and angels. The tears mentioned must be those with which they entered heaven; those extorted by sufferings, and sin, and fears, and the pangs of earthly friendship and death. And is it not more than sufficient compensation for the bitterest tears, that God collects them all, in compassionate remembrance of their afflictions, and to excite the tender actings of his love—that he meets those entering heaven itself in tears—tears not dried up by the consolation given on earth, and not inconsistent with much spiritual peace—he meets them not with rebuke but with condolence, not with frowns but with smiles, and with parental

sympathy " wipes" not some but " all tears from their eyes?" How are the earthly sorrows of the weeping child lost by degrees in the tide of filial gratitude, confidence, and love, rising in the soul, as the hand of the parent softly dries up the falling tear! And, what is this but a faint image of the bitterness of past grief being lost in the transport flowing from the experience of the divine condescension and pity, complacency and delight, while the heavenly Father " wipes away all tears," and saith to each of his children, " Art thou not my dear son, or daughter? Art thou not a pleasant child? I have saved thee, and will rejoice over thee with singing." Then shall be fulfilled in them, in its greatest extent, God's promise, in which he caused them to hope in the days of their pilgrimage: " The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

The instruction of this subject is important. It exhibits the whole plan and the means of the divine government, for the welfare of those " made willing in the day of power." Here they are in great tribulations for a time; hereafter, they are in transcendent glory for ever. Beware of admitting narrow and hard thoughts of God. Judge him not by a partial view of his dispensations, but from this extended survey of his plan learn that God really is preparing his people, by a sharp discipline and

vigorous exercises, for the noblest employments and the most distinguished honours, ever proportioned to their attainments in this school, and to their victories in these fields of fierce conflict under the banner of the Captain of salvation. Mistake not the nature of happiness. It consisteth not in the wisdom or actions renowned in this world; for God's people may be either "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in words and in deeds," or babes in understanding, and obscure in condition. "It consisteth not in the abundance of the things of this life;" for the favourites of heaven may be men "of sorrows and acquainted with grief," "and may not have a place where to lay their head;" or, they may roll in the affluence and sway the sceptre of a Solomon or Constantine. True happiness consisteth in "the favour of God, which is better than life," which "endureth for ever," and which is to be fully enjoyed in the world to come. Mistake not the means of securing this favour and happiness. It is not innocence; for, however some dream, that is not to be found among men. It is not grief for sin; for "our very tears need to be washed, and our repentance to be repented of." It is not amendment, though you could of yourselves renew your heart and life, as assuredly ye cannot; for this is no more than the duty of the time to come, and no atonement for the transgressions of the time past. It can be none of these, it can be nothing else than "the blood of the Lamb;" or, God would

not have "set forth his own Son to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood." It is "the blood of the Lamb" which justifieth, which sanctifieth, which renders more than conquerors, when applied by the Spirit through faith. This is the express declaration of God, 1 John i. 7,—the prayer of the saints on earth, Ps. li. 7,—the acknowledgment and theme of the saints in glory, Rev. v.

Be persuaded to "wash" your "robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb." Ye cannot question your need of this purification. Ye cannot be happy in a state of distance, opposition, or enmity to God; for "they who are far from him must perish." As born after the likeness of sinful Adam, ye are all as an unclean thing, on which God cannot look. As voluntary agents, ye have sinned times and ways without number; and sinners "cannot stand before him." The wrath of God abideth on you while in this state. Death is at the door. Hell openeth her mouth to receive you. But "the blood of the Lamb" is near you, in which you may wash and become clean,—become righteous and holy,—virtuous and happy. Say, is not the blood of Emmanuel of efficacy equal to your utmost need,—to make "you white as snow and as wool," though hitherto red as crimson and scarlet by sins most heinous and aggravated? Does not God authorize, nay command, you to wash and be clean? Is not Christ inviting you, in the language of compassion and love, to come to him and be saved? Is

not "the good Spirit" ready to sprinkle, to wash you on your suitable application? How many of your fellow-men, guilty as yourselves, have washed, are numbered with "the excellent ones of the earth," or raising a loftier note than their redeemed associates in praise of the Lamb on high? How many of your fellow-men neglect this fountain, and perish in good repute with the world? And will ye not justly estimate, vehemently desire, fervently pray, and diligently endeavour, that ye may be "washed in the blood of the Lamb?" Ah! delay not. The destroying angel is on the wing,—the flaming sword is lifted up; what if the descending stroke find you unwashed by this blood? Have you thus washed in the blood of the Lamb? then continue with those who already believe and hope, or know in their experience, that "the blood of the Lamb cleanseth from all sin,"—continue to make daily, hourly, habitual use of this divine laver. Continue to wash your "consciences, that they may be purged; your souls, that they may be sanctified; your works, that they may be accepted;" your "tribulations, that they may work patience, and experience, and hope;" your conflicts, that you may be more than conquerors; your dying struggle itself, that the king of terrors may surrender you into the arms of those angels charged by Jesus to convey you safe into his glorious presence, and place you before the throne. Jude 24, 25.

Bear in mind the nature and end of your tribu-

lations. It is the appointment of God, "that," as Christians, "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom." The degree of them may differ in different situations, but tribulations are common to the people of God in all ages. From the beginning of time they have been characterized as "a poor and an afflicted people." At this you should not be surprised. By the grace provided in the Gospel, the benefits of "great and sore troubles" far more than compensate for the evils of them: according to the apostle, Heb, xii. 11,—"they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who are exercised by them." Have ye "come to yourself" with the prodigal son; or "learnt the statutes of God" more perfectly with David; have ye said, "I have borne chastisement,—I will not offend any more;" have ye "reaped the peaceable fruits of righteousness;" have ye been "able to succour those that are tempted,"—"teaching transgressors the law of God, so that they turned unto him," and "strengthening your brethren;" have ye known the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, being "made conformable to his death,"—in and by sanctified tribulations; and will ye not say, in the full view of the most agonizing of them, "it was good for me that I was afflicted?" Some of you who may have reaped a portion of these "peaceable fruits of righteousness," from improved chastisement, are not yet able to say this much, but all of you of this experience are at least enabled to vindicate God for

your sufferings, to acknowledge much mercy in them, and to seek an entire submission to his will in the gospel and in his providence; and some of you may be animated to say, "I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." No doubt, this was the experience of the persons of whom the elder spoke, great as their tribulations were. While the world counted them of all men the most miserable, they felt the truth of their Lord's promise, "in the world ye shall have tribulations; in me ye shall have peace;" and they looked for the performance of that other promise, "when I have prepared a place for you, I will come and receive you to myself." Perhaps not a few of them could say, "by the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we are justified, we stand in grace, we rejoice in the hope of glory, and glory in tribulations." Survey their present state of honour and bliss, and say, was this "a hope that hath made them ashamed?"

Refuse not the comfort of this subject. This vision was more immediately intended to support and encourage John and the Christians who were to be subjected to troubles and sufferings in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ in the persecutions preceding the time of Constantine, and more remotely to support and comfort all Christians "in tribulation" of any kind, "washing their robes, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb." Suffer you must, believers, though your sufferings may not

be so severe as those of these martyrs. You may not have occasion "to resist unto blood, striving against sin;" but you, and "all who live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution," of a nature less atrocious, but still very hard to endure. Trials you must undergo, which may be fiery as the furnace seven times heated; and though they are not brought on you by your attachment to Christ, nevertheless you may in them "suffer with Christ," you may "know the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death," and, consequently "you shall reign with him."

And for which of all your trials endured in faith do you not find consolation here? Are you in "great tribulation?" this is the royal road into the kingdom,—the road deeply impressed with the footsteps of Jesus himself, and of all who have entered into his joy. Are you daily and hourly defiled in your very labours and conflicts for holiness, and daily and hourly afflicted by these defilements? you have "the blood of the Lamb" to make and preserve your garments pure as the white raiment of the officiating priest and of the triumphant conqueror. In respect of a realizing apprehension and eminently honourable communion, are you far from God, or even sometimes trembling at the idea of his presence? you have the same blood to make you nigh, to entitle and enable you to stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, as your security. Are you lamenting the imperfections and interruptions of your

services? you shall serve without ceasing as without sin, with increasing favour and delight. Are ye sometimes on the point of being forsaken, or are you actually so, according to your sense of your condition? you shall be encompassed with God as your tabernacle; he shall hide you in his pavilion. Are you experiencing the pains of temporal or of spiritual want? you shall be delivered from all such anguish; you "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." Are you fainting under the scorching sun of bodily labours or spiritual trials?" "the sun shall not light on you any more, nor any heat,"—"you shall cease from all your labours and your works shall follow you." "He who hath mercy on you," who now invisibly provides for you, shall then, arrayed in majesty, and grace, and love, sensibly guide and protect, invigorate and refresh you,—"shall feed you, and lead you to living fountains of waters." Have you friends in Jesus called away, and do the mournful circumstances of their pilgrimage and departure afflict you still? How should their present circumstances thus exhibited to you shed a cheering light on the former scenes, and at once purify and sweeten the stream of your sorrow! And is not the day coming when what you see by faith you shall see with the bodily eye,—when you shall meet and recognise these beloved objects, once wept over while in great tribulations, and in garments retaining some spots adhering to those of the children of God on

earth, now "clothed in white robes, and with palms in their hands;" and ye shall join in their everlasting song, "Salvation to our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb?" Should you, after all, go hence with lawful sorrow in your hearts,—with becoming tears in your eyes,—"God himself shall wipe them all away." God permitteth, God appointeth us to weep, while distant from his glorious presence. Precious tears, that direct our eyes more ardently, and quicken our steps more diligently homeward! Thrice precious tears, which attract the compassionate regard of God, amid the glories of heaven, and which himself shall dry up with parental gentleness and love!

SERMON VIII.

Rom. xiv. 1.—" —— Weak in the faith."

WEAKNESS in the faith is that defect of spiritual strength, by reason of which we evidently cannot, without hard and painful efforts, overcome the difficulties meeting us in the discharge of duty. Hence, the renewed often fail in duty; nay, sometimes they fall into gross offences; they occasionally yield to opposing difficulties, and are frequently overcome by the assaults of their spiritual enemies. They are new-born, sickly babes in Christ, of whom it is difficult to say whether they are dead or alive. They have made so little progress beyond the boundary line which separates the kingdom of God's dear Son from the kingdom of Satan, that it is sometimes scarcely possible to distinguish them from those who border on the other side of the line. I would fain help the weak in the faith to make progress in holiness and comfort; and I am no less anxious to undeceive those who have a name to live, and are dead.

To effect this, I purpose to give them some marks, which will enable them to distinguish themselves from those who bear some resemblance to them, but are not really in the faith,—to give them some consola-

tions, together with some exhortations and some directions suited to their circumstances. I will request their serious attention in particular, and that of all of every character. I pray God to give you all the hearing ear and the understanding heart!

I. Take some marks of faith in the weak.

1*st*, They have a sense of spiritual necessities. Those resembling them have either no sense, or but a slight one, of sin dwelling in them, so long as they are kept back from gross offences; they flatter themselves, in general, that they are not so greatly awanting in respect of holiness. With regard to guilt, they are not aware of its criminality, and of the certainty and intolerable nature of punishment. The weak in faith are distinguished from them by a lively sense of their spiritual wants. They feel that sin dwelleth in them; they are afflicted with its loathsomeness; they grieve that it spreads over the whole man, as a disgusting and consuming leprosy; and they are faint under a sense of the want of holiness, that spiritual health and wealth. Guilt, they are convinced, binds them over to suffer the wrath of the Almighty. Guilt is a millstone fastened to their necks, that threatens to sink them into the depths of everlasting wretchedness; and while it remains, they feel themselves poor indeed, amid the riches of the world.

Is spiritual poverty your grief? Do ye grieve at the want of a holy nature, under the loathsomeness

of a sinful heart and practice? Do ye tremble at the want of a justifying righteousness, under the apprehension of eternal wrath? This poverty of spirit marks the existence of faith in the weakest of the children of God. He who could scarcely call his faith aught but unbelief, shed tears over his spiritual poverty. Mark ix. 24.

2d, They esteem Christ to be "precious." Saith Peter unto the Christians of the dispersion, concerning Jesus Christ, "unto you who believe, he is precious." Professing Christians, who do not believe in him with the heart, cannot esteem him to be precious, because they do not think they need a Saviour of great value: hence their low thoughts of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. To them who believe, he must be precious. They have contracted infinite guilt; they have done infinite dishonour to God; they labour under infinite evils. How precious, then, is Christ to them, who comes to them with suitable remedies,—with a price to redeem their souls from death,—with a righteousness to secure the friendship of God,—with power to deliver from the power of sin! How inestimably valuable is Christ, whose price, and righteousness, and power, are infinite—adequate to the salvation of the chief of sinners, and to the vindication and illustration of the honour of an insulted Judge; because he is acting under the appointment of that Judge, and is "God manifest in the flesh!" Is Christ Jesus thus precious to you, because he is a necessary, because

he is a suitable, because he is an almighty Saviour? Is there any thing, in heaven or in earth, so precious in your esteem, because so excellent in himself, so honourable to God, so indispensable to your happiness, and that of other perishing sinners? The height of your esteem is, perhaps, to be measured by the depth of your grief for esteeming him so little.

3d, They sincerely desire the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. "To him that is athirst," saith our Lord from heaven, "I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely." Rev. xxi. 6. The influences of the Spirit are no less necessary to the verdure, and blossoms, and fruits of holiness, —in other words, to the vigour, and progress, and beauty of the spiritual life, than water is to those of plants and trees; and they are frequently set forth and promised under this refreshing figure in the Scriptures. These beauties are overlooked, and these influences are considered with a strange indifference, by unbelievers, some of whom reject them altogether. Those in the faith, how weak soever, are so instructed in the requirements of God's law, and the perfections of his nature, and their own want of conformity to and transgression of the law, with all their best endeavours, that they resemble men perishing for thirst, in the midst of unavailing labours. Therefore they desire and apply for the influences of the Spirit, which alone can impart light to their dim eyes, courage to their fainting

heart, and strength to their feeble arms, that they may work the work of the Lord with wisdom, and vigour, and success. Are ye desiring the grace of the Holy Ghost, to make you holy, as God is holy? Does your desire resemble the appetite of the thirsty? Is it painful and urgent? Will it be satisfied with nothing else? Is it restless, and urging you to use your utmost diligence to procure the needful supply from the fountain of the water of life?

4th, They cherish an habitual purpose and war against sin. Merely professing Christians have no fixed purpose against sin, at least against all sin. They scarcely confess that there are sins of the heart, apart from open acts of wickedness. Secret sins give them little trouble, especially sins of omission. Conformity to the world is common civility to men, and no transgression against God. Even flagrant offences are mourned, not because they offend the purity and basely repay the love of God, but because they draw down his wrath, or injure their reputation and worldly interests. The weak in faith have far other views of sin, and maintain a far different conduct with regard to it. In their estimation, sin is sin, whether it appear in the heart, the lip, or the life; whether it is discovered in the closet, the family, the sanctuary, or the market-place. They habitually will to do the will of God at all times. If they do what they would not, they condemn their conduct, they mourn over it, they do not allow themselves in it; for they hate sin with a perfect

hatred, as that abominable thing which the soul of God hateth, which cost the blood of Christ, and hath eternally ruined millions of immortal souls. Is the habitual bent of your will against all sin? Does the consciousness of sin not only grieve your hearts, but invigorate your hatred, and war against all sin? In proportion to the nearness of your approach to God will be your repentance and abhorrence of yourselves for sin.

These marks deserve attention, and every one should ask himself, Do I, especially I, who complain of weakness, and often tremble lest I be found among mere pretenders to godliness—do I discern them in myself? Have I an abiding sense of my spiritual poverty, of my want of righteousness, and of my liability to the wrath of God? Have I an inestimable value for Jesus Christ, as a suitable and all-sufficient Saviour for me? Do I entertain a sincere and unquenchable desire of obtaining the sanctifying and comforting influences of the holy Spirit? And have I a cordial abhorrence of sin, as offensive to my great and gracious God, manifested in an habitual struggle against it, though to my grief it occasionally prevail against me? These marks are not easily discovered and traced in the weak in the faith in whom they do exist. They are feeble in their nature and operations, they suffer occasionally by interruption—and the eyes dimmed by sorrows are far from being quick in discerning them. Watch them closely. Confine not your atten-

tion to single acts, or even occasional interruptions —observe rather their tendency and habitual influence—implore the grace of the Holy Spirit to enable you to discover your actual state—be not weary or despondent—persist, and you will be led to see the evidences of even the day of small things. When you make the discovery, think not that you shall attain to peace, much less joy. Ye may be tempted after all to despise the day of small things, —to conclude that it is not day but night with you still—to abandon desires, and hopes, and endeavours —to deny God the glory of the work wrought in you —and to endanger your own soul by your dissatisfaction with the procedure of the Holy Spirit towards you. I shall therefore,

II. Suggest some consolations for your support and encouragement.

1*st*, This weakness in the faith is no uncommon thing in the church of God in any age, and suitable provision is made for those affected with it in his gracious dispensations. They were found in the primitive Christian church; and, in general, weakness is the character of imperfectly instructed converts. The apostles themselves were, for a time, "fools, and slow of heart to believe," Luke xxiv. 25; "because they knew not the Scriptures;" John xx. 9; and they were so after their Lord had pronounced them "clean," John xv. 3. The exhortation of Paul in the text informs us that they

were to be found in the church at Rome. And our Lord gives directions for those in the church at Sardis, in whom the things of grace " remained, but were ready to die." Rev. iii. 2. You are not, therefore, to conclude that you are not in the faith, because ye are not strong in the faith. Believers of this character have been noticed and acknowledged, and their interests consulted by God, wherever he has had a true church on earth.

2d, Ye complain of weakness. A complaining state is a painful state. A complaining state is an imperfect, a defective state. Weakness in the faith is both a painful and defective state. Nothing can be more suitable, therefore, than to complain of it, and nothing more necessary to deliverance from it. But let not its evil qualities blind and render you insensible to its good ones. It is of weakness ye justly complain. Weakness, however, is not want of life. Weakness can only be felt and complained of by one possessing life. Weakness is a bad thing, and is to be complained of and feared; but life is a good thing, and to be thankfully acknowledged, and considered as a ground of hope. Life, spiritual life, is the most precious thing in the world: hence, the great characteristic of spiritual life is called " precious faith." 2 Pet. i. 1. Now, whether weak or strong, it differs only in degree, it is the same in kind, and in this respect equally precious and equally to be valued.

3d, God is the author of spiritual life, whether

weak or strong. Now, whether is a parent more concerned for a weakly or for a strong child? All parents, all sickly children, know, that the weakly child engrosses more of the attention and active affection. This is precisely the case with regard to the conduct of God to the weak in faith. He loves them because they are children, Hos. xi. 1; he pities them, because they are weak children, even as a father pitieth his children; and, as tender lambs "he gathers them with his arms, and carries them in his bosom," Is. xl. 11. And where could they be more honourably or more safely placed?

4th, Christ redeemed the weak with his blood, sanctified them by his Spirit, and will save them in the exercise of his compassion and power. This same apostle speaks of "the weak brother, for whom Christ died," 1 Cor. viii. 11. Did Christ love him for whom he died? Must not that person be dear to him, for whose ransom he gave his precious blood? And will he not save him, whom of an enemy he has converted into a friend. Yes, most certainly. Though he is a bruised reed he will not break him, though smoking flax he will not quench him, Matth. xii. 20. If he strays as a sheep, he will seek and find him; if he is sick and wounded, he will bind him up and heal him, Ezek. xxxiv. 16; and, whatever his weakness and danger may be, he will save him to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25.

5th, Consider the gracious promises made to the weak in the Scriptures. God promises them grace

sufficient for them, and final salvation. Isaiah says, "God giveth power to the faint," Is. xl. 29. Paul affirms, that "God will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape," 1 Cor. x. 13. And in these decisive terms he addresseth the Philippians, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 6. Consider these things, for which ye have the sure word of God's promise, and imitate the Psalmist, ready to sink into despondency: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God," Ps. xliii. 5.

6th, The weak in faith worship God in spirit and truth. Except when under spiritual delusion, they do not neglect religious duties; and it is God and their own improvement they seek in ordinances, instead of the many worldly and by-ends which move the formal. Notwithstanding their regularity and habitual purity of intention, they are afflicted by the distance at which they stand from God, the darkness and unsettledness of their minds and views, and the languor or lifelessness of their affections. Here there is nothing but their willingness to approve, for the sacrifice is otherwise very unsuitable. But even here God meets them with the language of compassion and encouragement.

To them he saith, " If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." 2 Cor. viii. 12.

III. This leads me to exhort you to beware of remaining in and cherishing a state of weakness. These consolations are not intended to render you contented with your present state, and careless and slothful in respect of improvement. They are intended to preserve you from despondency, and ineffectual attempts, and utter hopeless inactivity; and to encourage you to hope, and labour, and wait. Beware, then, of remaining in this state of weakness. It is a transgression against the first and great commandment, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, strength, and mind;" and can ye remain contented in a state of sinning against this commandment? Beware of remaining in this state, for in doing so, you will deprive yourselves of the rich spiritual comforts enjoyed by the strong in faith. Though it should not shut you out of heaven at last, are you willing to undergo all the evils to which it will subject you? Are you willing to be deprived of the sweetness of divine truth, of the testimony of a good conscience, of the witness of the Spirit, of peace and joy in believing, of the lively hope of the heavenly inheritance, of rejoicing in Christ Jesus; and to walk in darkness, doubting, and fearing, and trembling, throughout your course? Beware of remaining in this state, for in

so doing you will oppose the kindness of the Spirit, and the growing nature of his grace in your hearts. Are you prepared to vex, to grieve the holy Spirit, and to take all the consequences of his displeasure? If he is grieved with you, will he not withdraw the active influences of his grace? If these are withdrawn, will ye not become more unfit for spiritual services; will ye not fall into the hands of your spiritual enemies; may ye not yield to temptations to great sin, as did Peter thus forsaken? Beware of remaining in this state, for it is a transgression against the second as well as the first commandment. As the children of God, and the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ in love, are ye not bound to exercise active benevolence—to do good to your neighbour? Ye are not left to question this inference. Christ hath prescribed your duty in express terms. He hath commanded you, as Christians, "to receive the weak, and bear their burdens;" Rom. xiv. 1; Gal. vi. 1; but how can you do so if you are bending and sinking under your own burden? He hath commanded you to "strengthen your brethren;" but in what manner can you impart to others what is awanting in yourselves? Luke xxii. 32. Beware of remaining in this state of spiritual weakness; for by so doing ye will withhold glory from God. If ye withhold glory from God, you oppose the end of your existence, and the end of your creation in Christ Jesus. Is not God hereby glorified, that ye bear much fruit? Is it

not to his praise and glory that ye be filled with the fruits of righteousness? Are not the men of the world led to glorify him, when the light of his people's good works is shining around them? And will ye withhold these revenues of glory from God by remaining in a state of spiritual weakness? Oh, beware of remaining in this state, for in so doing you will diminish your future reward. Are ye aspiring after an increase of worldly goods by increasing industry, and will ye be meanly and slothfully content with a scanty portion in heaven? Are ye anxious that ye be not outdone by any of your competitors in the honest exertion of talents, which has the promise of suitable reward? And will ye be satisfied to be the last in heaven, who are here esteemed the first? He who simply aims at escaping hell, is in great danger of being condemned with the wicked and slothful servant, who hid his talent in the earth.

IV. A few directions will be acceptable to those who feel the suitableness and weight of these exhortations.

1*st*, Cherish deep humility. The corruption of our nature encourages pride and presumption; and in proportion as these are strong, faith will be weak in the believer. Yet, surely, pride was not made for man, sprung from the clay, sprung from Adam, defiled by his moral pollution, and groaning under his curse. Surely pride was not made for man

especially, who acknowledges that he is indebted to grace for salvation,—grace that flows to him through redeeming blood. "Be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble," 1 Pet. v. 5.

2d, Avoid whatever weakens, and employ whatever strengthens faith. Christ is the object of faith, and the source of spiritual life and strength. Christians are weak, because their eyes are too often fixed on themselves or on the world, and too seldom and feebly fixed on Christ. Contemplate him, then, frequently, and with desire and trust, as set forth crucified for the salvation of sinners. This is the sincere milk of the word of God, which will make you grow, 1 Pet. ii. 2. "This is the word of his grace which is able to build you up," Acts xx. 32. This is the gospel of Christ, which is "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth," Rom. i. 16.

3d, Seek the aid of the Holy Spirit. Are you weak? the holy Spirit helpeth infirmities. Rom. viii. 26. Are ye unstable from weakness? the Holy Spirit stablisheth believers in Christ. This is the fountain whence you must draw spiritual health and strength; and your Lord graciously offers to assist you in drawing, that you may drink and be satisfied: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink," John vii. 37.

4th, Exercise yourselves unto godliness. Spiritual weakness and disease, as well as corporeal,

are contracted by indolence and inactivity. Consider what your duties are, and resolutely and regularly perform them to the best of your present power. The very exercise will strengthen and cheer the inner man. The active Christian is the strong and healthy Christian. And how will your hearts be refreshed when your conscience approves of your conduct! And is not the joy of the Lord your strength? Neh. viii. 10.

5th, Converse much with the strong. All are sensible of the imperceptible but powerful influence of the temper, judgment, and example of those with whom we associate. If we converse much with the weak, our disease will be confirmed and strengthened. There is infection in their society. We derive a dangerous sympathy from it. In general, the strong know what is in the heart of the weak, because they have been weak. They have a command to receive and cherish the weak, and a promise that their labours shall not be in vain. "When thou shalt be turned," said our Lord to Peter, about to experience the feebleness of his own strength, "strengthen thy brethren." In a dependence on the implied promise, frequent the society, receive the counsel, and imbibe the spirit of those now strong in the Lord. Consolatory as this subject is, I cannot overlook the many severe reproofs which it distinctly conveys.

1*st*, It reproves all those who indulge weakness in the faith. It reproves all those who tamely and

feebly yield to feelings and suggestions without striving against them,—all those who leave off prayer, contrary to the command of our Lord to " pray always, and not to faint," and in contempt of their own interest, and the condescension of the Spirit, who graciously meets with and strengthens his people in this exercise,—all those who leave off reading or hearing the word of God, " which is spirit and life,"—all those who forsake the ordinances of the gospel, in which the Lord gives himself for the spiritual nourishment of his people, and for their growth in grace. Thus, they flee from the Saviour, and the means of life and strength, and throw themselves into the mouth of the devouring lion, their greatest enemy.

2d, It reproves all who think themselves something, while they are nothing. A scriptural creed, attention to the forms of religion, freedom from gross vices, considerable gifts, and a name to live among men, may lead a man to think himself something. But is not this man actually nothing after all? Instead of aiming at the glory of God, which is the chief end of man, it is his own glory at which he aims. Instead of resting on the righteousness of Christ for acceptance, the only name given under heaven whereby he can be saved, he resteth on his own righteousness. Instead of being something,—of being strong in the faith, he is not in the faith at all.

3d, It reproves those who are strong and bear

not with the weak. They may be stronger than those called weak,—have more knowledge, a firmer hold of some leading truths, more evident consistency, a greater activity and more comfort in their religion; but it is a great weakness to be intolerant to their weaker brethren. Is not faith that principle which assimilates men to God? What is their faith which allows them to violate the command of their Lord,—a distinguished precept in the law of love? What is their faith that suffers them to act as God does not act, even to themselves, constantly standing in need of his forbearance, his compassion, his free grace?

4th, It reproves those who never inquire whether they are strong or weak. Who does not inquire into the state of his health, especially if doubtful,—of his progress in learning,—of his fortune,—of his country,—of Europe,—of the world, according to his measure of mental cultivation? But what are all these inquiries compared with an inquiry into the state of our souls? The world itself would be but a poor price for an immortal soul. Certainty on all other subjects cannot compensate a doubt about our salvation. A weak faith is still faith, and evidences a right and a capacity to enjoy salvation; as clearly as a weak state of health secures to an heir the right of succession, while it creates uneasiness as to the certainty of it. He can be no scholar who makes no inquiry into the state of his learning,—no man of business, who inquires not into the

state of his affairs,—no patriot, who is indifferent to the situation of his country; and how can he be a believer, how can he be duly and deeply concerned about salvation, who never examines whether he be in the faith? Does he not evidently belong to that class concerning whom the apostle puts the awful and unanswerable question, "How shall they escape who neglect so great salvation?"

5th, This subject reproves those who are declining in religion. As Christians advance to a mature age in their spiritual life, they lose much of the fire of the youth and novelty of it; but what they lose in heat is more than compensated by solidity and judgment. Alas! it is not uncommon to "fall in a blameable manner from their first love!" Rev. ii. 5. This discovers itself in the decline of their appetite and relish for spiritual things,—in the increase of worldly cares, and toils, and pleasures,—in more indifference about sin,—in the neglect of secret religious duties,—in the encouragement of vain thoughts,—and in the indulgence of some practices less disreputable in the world, but wholly inconsistent with the spirit of vital active godliness. This is a dangerous state of spiritual health. A weak constitution is the object of less painful commiseration, especially as it is accompanied by the hope of improvement. But in this case the strong have wasted their own strength, have undermined their own health, have broken their own constitution, with their eyes open to their danger. Here there

is suffering, and suffering occasioned by vicious conduct, and accompanied by less hope of recovery. This is a spectacle most affecting to the spectator, —spiritual distemper, the result of spiritual misconduct, and threatening spiritual death. What then should it be to the patient? But the patient is sunk into a slumbering state, that renders him insensible to his condition, and to the friendly voice of admonition. He, whose voice shall penetrate the dull recesses of the grave, and waken the sleeping dead, speaketh to him. Thus may his voice penetrate the ear and the heart of each of those declining in religion, when he says, " I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die !" Rev. iii. 1.

SERMON IX.

JOHN vii. 37.—"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

OUR Lord always adapts the subject of his discourse to the circumstances, and his manner of delivering it to the importance of the matter. The text is an instance of this adaptation. He spake it on the last day of the feast of tabernacles. This solemnity was kept to commemorate the goodness of God, who protected and provided for the Israelites, while they dwelt in tents in the wilderness, and who afterwards established them in the fertile land of Canaan. The last day of this feast was observed with peculiar solemnity, and hence it was called, "the great day of the feast." On this day the Jews often repeated the great hosanna; on this day they brought water from the pool of Siloam, to be poured out with the wine of their sacrifice. And during these acts, they sang these words of Isaiah, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation;" and expected the long-promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit. While they profess to desire spiritual influences, and to seek them where they are not to be found, Jesus informeth his countrymen that he is the dispenser of them, and

will bestow them, in a satisfying abundance, on all who apply to him for them.

Jesus represents the Holy Ghost, and his influences, as the prophets had often done, by water, without which man cannot live; and invites all who desire them to come to him, assuring them, that whosoever will receive them shall be satisfied, even as he is who quencheth his thirst. This could not be said of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. They cannot satisfy the soul; they are not given to every man who believes in Christ, and they are by no means necessary to his happiness. Of the saving operations of the Spirit all this may be said. And they are not excluded by the observation of the apostle—"The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." If literally understood, these words would lead us to infer, that Jesus neither spake of the miraculous nor of the saving influences of the Spirit; for both were, long before, given in some measure. If figuratively interpreted, this observation is perfectly consistent with the conclusion already drawn, namely, that it cannot be the miraculous, and must be the saving, influences of the Spirit, to which our Lord refers in the text. These had fallen as dew under the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations. Deut. xxxii. 2. In consequence of Christ's ascension, these were to "descend as rain," Psalm lxxii. 6; "to pour as a flood;" and "to cover the earth, as waters the sea." Natural, therefore, is the observation of the evan-

gelist, comparing the former communications of grace with the last, when he remarks, that the sprinkling which preceded was figuratively nothing, compared with the effusion that should follow the exaltation of our Lord's human nature to the throne of the mediatorial kingdom. The time of this effusion of saving influences was at hand, and Jesus invited men to come to him, that they might partake of them. And observe, he delivered his instruction and invitation in an awakening and impressive manner, suited to their importance. "He stood, that he might be seen; he cried, that he might be heard of all."

The text teacheth us, that the saving influences of the Spirit are necessary and satisfying to men awakened to a true sense of their situation, as water to the thirsty,—that Jesus is the dispenser of these blessings,—and that those alone receive them, who, thirsting for them, come to Christ, and accept them in the way of God's appointment.

I. The text teacheth us, that the saving influences of the Spirit are necessary and satisfying to men awakened to a true sense of their situation, as water is to the thirsty,—that they are "drink." From the Scriptures we learn these are his enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting operations. And, concerning them, our Lord observes, "whosoever drinketh the water that I shall give him will never thirst." John iv. 14.

1*st*, The enlightening influences of the Holy Ghost are necessary and satisfying to men awakened to a true sense of their situation, as water is to the thirsty,—that they are "drink." Holy men spake the word, now written, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and the Holy Ghost openeth the heart to attend to it, read or preached,—to examine, understand, and receive the truths of it concerning God, ourselves, and the way of salvation. Without this knowledge, apostate mankind are exposed to the curse of the law of God, and involved in a darkness that conceals the only way of escape. There is a Saviour, but they are ignorant of him,—a place of refuge, of which conscience tells them they have need, but they cannot discover it. "They sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death." The deplorable ignorance of Greece and Rome, in respect to the knowledge of God, of man, and the way of salvation, proves the necessity of the outward revelation by the Spirit; and the backwardness of some to come to the light, the unavailing knowledge of others living under the gospel, and the grateful acknowledgment of all become wise unto salvation, demonstrate the necessity of his inward influences. And these are not more necessary than they are satisfying. The knowledge which the Spirit thus effectually communicates, is as much more satisfying than all other branches of science, as the light of the sun is more pleasing and useful than the glimmering of a

taper. The Spirit teacheth the knowledge of the most important of all truths,—of the living and true God, and of Jesus Christ, his Son, whom he hath sent, which is eternal life. He teacheth truth the most incontestably proved by evidences seen and handled. And he unfolds truths the most excellent in themselves, the most extensive and diversified, even the perfections of God, from eternity to eternity; contriving and executing the works of creation, or providence, or grace and justice, for his own honour, and the good of all who resemble him. And the efficacy of the Spirit's teaching is no less satisfying than the subject and evidences of what is taught. When he speaks to us with power, we hear, at first, an alarming sound of guilt and wrath; and then a joyful one—of mercy and reconciliation. When he takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us, we see them at first obscurely, and afterwards plainly; we enter into the kingdom of God, and rejoice accordingly. Who can describe the delight experienced when he brings them still nearer, so that we obtain a growing sense, nay, a taste, of their power and sweetness! As these are, properly, consequences of spiritual light in the understanding, they belong to his other operations,

The *2d* class of which is called his sanctifying influences. By these he creates a clean heart, and renews a right spirit, in those whom he savingly illuminates. They are created by him, after the

image of God, not only in knowledge, but in righteousness and true holiness. Than these sanctifying influences of the Spirit, what can be more necessary to man, who is enmity to God in his heart, and by wicked works? While man retains this character, must he not be miserable, and must not his misery increase with his knowledge and experience? Can a moral agent be happy, while defiled and deformed with the spots, wrinkles, filthinesses, and putrefying sores of vice? Is it possible, that a being formed for the enjoyment of God can be at rest, while shut out from his presence, as every unholy person must be? And how can a transgressor of the law be but wretched, bearing or exposed to the curse of it, in time and in eternity? Of the evils of moral deformity, and of separation from God, sinners may remain greatly insensible through life. This ominous calm only precedes that storm of indignation and wrath, the flashes of which will horribly illuminate with the knowledge and experience of their misery. From this wrath some vainly imagine they can escape, by changing their sinful views and habits at their own pleasure. But when did the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots; or when has he, who has been accustomed to do evil, learnt of himself to do well? This discovery of his total inability to restore himself to a fitness for communion with God, would only increase the despair of the soul thirsting for righteousness, did not the Holy Spirit gradually purify him from every filthiness of

flesh and spirit, and perfect him in holiness, in the fear of the Lord. And how must the comfort and the joy of the renewed soul rise with his growing resemblance to God! He groaned under a sense of wrath, but his renewed nature is a proof of God having "accepted him in the beloved,"—"for whom he justifieth, them he also sanctifieth." He was loathsome in his own eyes, but now he bears the image of God, and is adorned "with the beauty of holiness." He was poor and needy, now he is enriched with godliness, which is "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." And that his joy might be full, as was observed,

3d, The Spirit acteth as his comforter by the word, but distinctly from the word. He teacheth the renewed man how to pray effectually for consolation; he helps him against his adversaries, and under his trials; he witnesseth with his Spirit that he is a child of God, by shedding abroad the love of God in his heart; he enables him to glory even in tribulation; and he is in him a fountain of peace and joy. These comforts of the Holy Ghost are not the same in all Christians, nor in the same Christian at all times. The distribution of them is according to the will of Christ, and is what is most suitable to the progress, temper, and circumstances of the disciples. And how necessary are the consolations of the Holy Spirit to man, "who is born to trouble,"—in whom "the spirit lusteth against the flesh, and

the flesh against the spirit,"—in man, "who wrestleth with spiritual wickednesses in high places!" In these circumstances, earthly comforts want sweetness, want efficacy, want extent. In these circumstances, the operations of unassisted reason are often fettered, perverted, and afflicting. The Holy Ghost is a comforter equal to the occasions of sorrow; he is spiritual and omniscient; he is all-powerful and all-gracious. Let the experience of the greatly afflicted believers proclaim the sufficiency of his consolations. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." Blessed is he who is thus enlightened, and sanctified, and comforted, by the Holy Spirit! He is brought from darkness to a marvellous light; from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's own dear Son. He not only sees the glories of this empire gradually displayed to him, but he is made to resemble the inhabitants of it, and to partake of their bliss in proportion as he is changed into their likeness. To whom shall we go for these necessary and satisfying influences? God is the source of them; the Spirit is the immediate author of them. To God, offended by our transgressions, reason, and even the supposition of intermediate deities among the heathen, intimate that we cannot go immediately. Who, then, is the Mediator intrusted with the dispensation of them, according to the counsels of God? Jesus tells us in the text, as was observed,

II. That he himself is the dispenser of them. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And, on inquiry, we find that he uniformly claims this office—that he is appointed to it—that he is admirably qualified for it—and that the experience of his followers corroborates all these evidences.

1*st*, Jesus claims the office of dispensing the saving influences of the Spirit. This he does in circumstances the most interesting. To himself he directs for saving grace—the impure Samaritan—the Jews professing to wait for it on the great day of the feast—and his beloved disciples, sorrowful in the prospect of his going away, and afraid of the opposition with which they were to meet. After his ascension, he directs to himself, for fresh supplies of grace, the church of Sardis, and all who, like her, have a name to live, and are ready to die. In these circumstances, may we not implicitly rely on the well-known love of Jesus to souls—on his peculiar affection for his followers—on his regard for the church, purchased with his own blood—and on his zeal for the honour of God, and the interests of his kingdom? Besides, does God command us, from heaven, to hear his Son, and will we not trust in him? Does the Holy Spirit, of whose influences he claims the distribution, testify that he is the faithful witness; and will we reject

his powerful testimony? To this sufficient evidence we add,

2dly, That Christ was appointed to dispense these saving influences. Whatever the Old Testament foretells that Messiah shall be or do, it foretells that God hath appointed him to be or do. I need not stop to prove that Jesus, to whom the law and the prophets bear witness, is the Messiah. And it is sufficient to observe, that the saving influences of the Spirit are signified by oil, as well as by water. His names, Messiah and Christ, inform us, that he is anointed to an office. If ye ask, to what office, and by whom, and with what he was anointed, Isaiah answers in his name,—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to give the oil of joy." This was signified by the precious oil "poured on Aaron's head, and that ran down to the skirts of his garments." Hence, John says to those who had received the Spirit, "ye have an unction from the Holy One." When grace is signified by water, the prophets represent Christ as the abundant source of it. The man who shall be "a hiding-place from the storm," shall also be "as rivers of water in a dry place," saith Isaiah. And Zechariah foretells that he shall be "a fountain opened in the house of David for sin"—to take away the guilt of it—"and for uncleanness"—to purify from its pollutions. The claim of Christ comes sanctioned by the seal of God. He did not take the

honour on himself without being called of God: he accepted this call. And the Holy Ghost, who declared the appointment by the prophets, at the same time declared his own concurrence in it, and that he cheerfully placed his influences at the disposal of Christ. This solemn appointment prepares us for the third proof on this head, that,

3d, He is admirably qualified for this office. As Deity is the source of saving influences, none could dispense them but one, who could communicate with God and man, who had a right to ask them for men, and who could enter into their infirmities. Being Emmanuel, Christ is qualified to mediate between God and man. Being the High Priest of salvation, he hath made atonement for sin, which was indispensable to successful intercession for sinners; and, having entered into the holiest of holies with his own blood, "he hath received these gifts for men, even for the rebellious," and like the High Priest on his return from within the veil, he is now ready to "bless the people." And his experience on earth admirably qualifies him to bestow his grace in measures suited to our necessities. His Deity discovers all our wants, and his humanity sympathizes in all our sorrows. He can have compassion on them who are ignorant, and out of the way, forasmuch as he also was compassed with infirmity. "He is a merciful and faithful High Priest; for he was tempted in all points as we are, though without sin; and he is still touched with

the feeling of our infirmities." Thus, the person, the experience of Christ, and his intercession in consequence of his atonement, prove that he is well qualified to dispense saving grace. This is confirmed, this is put beyond a doubt,

4th, By the experience of his disciples. This experience is extensive and diversified. A few examples will suffice. The assertion of John, speaking of Jesus, as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, is very satisfactory on this head,—"Of his grace have we all received, and grace for grace." Of himself, and of all who have thus believed, the apostle Paul says, "God hath saved us by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ." How various soever the degrees of the operations of the Spirit, the grace and the measure of it are regulated and distributed by Christ. "Unto every one of us," saith the same apostle, "is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ." To him was the primitive church indebted for those outpourings of the Spirit, by which thousands were converted at once, and elevated to the heights of holiness and assurance. And to him does the world now owe those mighty influences, that are preserving his empire in places which were dry and barren in the first ages of Christianity, and which are still exposed to the scorchings of fiery trials. That we languish through the scantiness of divine influences, is to us matter of humiliation

and fear. "Our sins have separated between God and us." But that we were watered when the primitive churches were nigh unto cursing—that we are still sprinkled, while we contemplate their end, which "is to be burned," is subject of thankfulness, is ground of encouragement to pray for a time of refreshing from on high. And blessed be the Lord, who is pointing out the source of these divine influences of which we are so needful; and at the same time instructing us how to approach, with the assurance of obtaining what we desire; for he informs us,

III. That those only obtain the full and satisfying enjoyment of divine grace, who thirst for it, who come to Christ for it, and who drink. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

1*st*, In order to obtain the full and satisfying enjoyment of divine grace, we must desire it, even as the thirsty desire drink—we must "thirst." God is the fountain of spiritual blessing. From him the whole human race have departed, and, in this state of estrangement, they wander in a dry and parched land, where no water is. Of this how few are truly sensible! The multitude are disposed to wish for nothing more than what temporal gratification their own broken cisterns can yield—cisterns that can hold no water. But of all this, he who spiritually thirsts

hath a deep and abiding sense. As the thirsty man hath a painful feeling of drought, so hath he of his sad estrangement from God, and of the divine displeasure—of his ignorance, unholiness, guilt, and emptiness of all true comfort. As the thirsty man feels that nothing save water can quench his thirst, so he feels that nothing but the grace of the Holy Spirit can rectify these disorders, and assure him of reconciliation with God—nothing but the grace of the Holy Spirit can adorn him with light and purity, and fit him for the communion of the blessed. And, as the thirsty man vehemently desires water, so he burns for the refreshing influences of the Spirit. The splendour of royalty, the power of empire, the gratifications of wealth, contain nothing suited to this want and wish. To his eye they seem a sandy desert. In the midst of them he feels himself perishing, and cries aloud, "O God, my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and parched land, where no water is." And, my friends, unless ye also thirst in this manner, ye must perish. It is the thirsty to whom God's special invitations are addressed, Is. lv. 1. Indeed, none but the thirsty will accept the invitation.

Do ye, then, feel your need, perceive the fulness of the Spirit, and earnestly desire his influences? Let me entreat you, however, to beware of a false desire, as ye would of a false appetite. The one is not more dangerous to the health of the body, than the other is to that of the soul. Let me ask you,

is your desire cordial, and not in word only; constant, and not changing; fervent, and not languid; active and not slothful? While ye diligently use means, do ye regard the Holy Ghost as employing and prospering them? Are ye as desirous of his sanctifying, as of his enlightening and comforting influences? And does your desire terminate on the honour of God, and your holy enjoyment of his friendship? Though your wishes are not yet gratified—faint not. They are only delayed. All the promises are yea and amen in Christ. Despond not, because your desire is not impetuous. Measure it by your steady regard to all the operations of the Spirit, by your diligent use of those means appointed to strengthen desire, rather than by the vehemence of the affection; and prepare for the satisfying enjoyment of divine grace. He whose desire does not in some measure correspond to all the parts of this description, is a stranger to the thirst mentioned in the text, and hath no interest in this promise; but he who entertains it, though comparatively feeble as yet, is on the way to complete felicity. His desire itself is of the operation of the Spirit, enlightening savingly, and it is a pledge of his purifying and comforting influences. No such spiritual desire can be the produce of corrupt nature. Let him who entertains this desire come to me, saith the Lord, he shall be made welcome, and already have I bestowed on him ability to obey my invitation.

2d, Coming to Christ is the next thing necessary to the full and satisfactory enjoyment of the saving influences of the Spirit. Coming to Christ is a figurative expression, signifying in general an application to him with trust in him for the blessings desired, John vi. 35. This act evidently implies these three things,—first, that we are convinced, fully persuaded, of Christ's willingness, as well as of his ability, to bestow the saving influences of the Spirit; for "he who cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him." Second, that "like the disciples we forsake all"—even all those things which hinder our approach to Christ for the Spirit, and follow him alone. And, third, that we ask grace to save; for the promise is, "to him who asketh shall it be given—even the Holy Spirit."

1*st*, Coming to Christ implies a full persuasion of his being cordially disposed, as well as completely able, to bestow all the saving influences of the Spirit. That Christ is intrusted with the dispensation of spiritual influences, his own claim, the appointment of God, his perfect fitness for the office, and the experience of his people, amply demonstrate. And why should we distrust his willingness to bestow saving grace on those desiring it, while every important action of his loudly proclaims his benevolence? Inquire into the end of each of them; and be not faithless, but believing. He assumed our nature, and appeared in our miserable world;

and he declares he did so, "because the Lord hath anointed me, to give the oil of joy to them who mourn." He died; and the apostle tells us, in the name of all believers, "he redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us—that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." He arose again, ascended up on high, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Before his incarnation, he says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," Is. xlv. 22; on earth he stands, and cries aloud, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink," John vii. 37; and from the heights of heavenly glory he still proclaims, "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life." Nay, so often as he is named, Jesus wills us to believe that he is cordially disposed to save us from our sins. Thirsting soul, what spiritual desires can you entertain which Christ is not able to satisfy? What objection to his good-will, that he is not labouring to remove? "I am a very great sinner," saith one. But did not Christ come to call sinners—to save the chief of sinners, and thus to show the power of his grace? He came to give his blood that they may be pardoned, and his Spirit to apply their forgiveness, and to sanctify them—which acts cannot be separated, and the last is the seal of the first. Another saith, "I am destitute of any good quality to recommend me to Christ." True; but what does he require of

you besides a sincere desire of his saving grace? "Though your desire be frail as the bruised reed, he will not break it—though it be faint as the smoking flax, he will not quench it." A third complains that "he has no right on which he may found a claim on Christ." But does not Christ himself furnish you with a valid one—his own sure promise—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out?" All ye who doubt of Christ's willingness to save those who come to him for divine influences, remember that he hath seen with compassion, and while yet afar off, many returning who were once prodigal, as you have been, and that he ran to them, and fell on their neck, and embraced them, and gave orders to adorn them with all the graces of the Spirit, and to feast them with all the goodness of God's house. Persuasive as these considerations are, there is in man "a slowness of heart to believe," that nothing but the Spirit of God can quicken. If he accompany these outward means—if he feelingly convince of Christ's willingness to save, then like the disciples ye also will,

2d, Leave all that opposeth your approach to him for the Spirit. How ready soever to declare your willingness to come to and follow Christ—reflect that this implies a separation painful to you, as was that of Abraham from his country, his friends, and family. Ye must leave your favourite sins, though dear as "a right hand or a right eye." If ye are truly desiring spiritual health, ye have left

off whatever aggravates your spiritual malady—the gratifications of the lust of the flesh, and of the eye, and of the pride of life, and are coming to the great Physician for a thorough cure—a sanctified heart. Ye must leave that flattering confidence once reposed in your own righteousness for the divine favour; for they who are, in their own esteem, rich and increased with goods, having need of nothing, are indeed miserable, and wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked; and most of any need to renounce self-confidence, to come to Christ "for gold, and white raiment, and eye-salve." In going to him, you must no longer think that your outward obedience, which is imperfect—or your sorrow for past sin, which is no atonement for past offences—or your amendment, which, though complete, could not raise you above the rank of an unprofitable servant for the future; that any one, or all of these together, is a suitable price for the grace of God, of which the blood of Christ is the appointed, the accepted, and the adequate price. Those who are actually travelling in this path must adopt the language of Paul, and say, "What things were gain to me, those I count loss, that I may be found in Christ." All of you who are of this mind are now adding, "To whom, O Lord, shall we go? Thou, and thou alone, hast the words of eternal life." If this be the case, ye are ready,

3d, To apply—nay, ye are actually applying, to Christ for them in the places where he communi-

cates his grace. As man, Christ is in the heavens; as God, he is every where; and as the dispenser of saving influences, he is graciously present by his Spirit, in the word, sacraments, and prayer. And in these, they who apply to him, wait on him in obedience to his command, and in confidence of his faithfulness. Is this your exercise? Then ye are statedly waiting on him in all these ordinances. Ye are waiting on him in the use of his Word, trusting that he will open the Scriptures to you, and make your hearts burn within you. Ye are waiting on him in prayer, and in the words of the woman of Samaria, entreat him, " Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not." Ye are waiting on him in social worship, looking for the fulfilment of that promise, " Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." You wait on him in the sacrament of baptism,—for the " renewing of the Holy Ghost, to be shed abroad on you more abundantly through Jesus Christ." Ye wait on him in the sacrament of the supper, for the communion of his body, which is meat indeed, and for the communion of his blood, which is drink indeed. And in all these ye are supplicating with the humility of conscious unworthiness, with the importunity of intolerable want, and with the patient perseverance of hope and trust. Hence learn that ye who are not thirsting for the Spirit—who are not convinced of Christ's willingness to bestow it—who have not broken off the practice of

sin—who have not left all confidence in the flesh, cannot in this state and temper apply to Christ for the saving influences of the Spirit, "in spirit and in truth," though ye regularly attend on his ordinances.—And ye who desert his ordinances, or who neglect or frequent them just as it suits your humour—ye have no more reason to expect a blessing, than the rebel has to expect pardon, who this moment kisses the offer of it, and the next tramples it under foot. But ye who have in the appointed way come to Christ, thirsting for spiritual influences, ye may drink,—ye are commanded to drink. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

And this is the third and last thing required in order to enjoy the saving and satisfying influences of the Holy Spirit. If coming to Christ signifies a believing application to him who dispenseth the waters of life, drinking them must imply the dispositions with which they ought to be received and applied,—it must imply the reception of all these influences of the Spirit with joy and gratitude,—and the application of them with increasing desire and pleasure. "We come to the wells of salvation, and we must draw water with joy." We have asked the cup of salvation, and we must receive it with gratitude and praise. Let us seriously inquire whether we entertain such a sense of the blessings to be received, as will enable us thus to accept

them from the hand of the Lord. Have we duly estimated the value of the gift,—the Holy Ghost to abide in us,—the blessedness that accompanies it, —the glory and grace of Emmanuel who bestows it,—the amazing price with which he purchased it, —and the free and condescending manner in which he communicates it? If our heart is really alive to true excellency and generosity, it leaps within us as we take this passing glance of invaluable blessings; and our language is that of gratitude, devoting us to God. Ps. cxvi. 16.

We must not only take but drink of the water of life offered us by Christ. No refreshment can be derived from the cup in the hand, and none from grace merely assented to, even with thanksgiving. Wherefore, ye must not only take, but taste the waters of life with relish,—ye must make trial of their virtues. Nay, ye must not only taste the heavenly gift, as some have done, who afterwards fell away, without the possibility of being renewed, but ye must "drink." Ye must receive into your hearts a large portion of all the influences of the Spirit, and diligently apply his enlightening grace to what in you is dark, his sanctifying grace to what is unholy, and his comforting grace to what is sorrowful. Though the influences of the Spirit are satisfying as to their nature, so that you will never need to apply to any other source for happiness, ye must not expect to be satisfied with their measure so as to desire no increase. Your thirst for them must be

proportioned to your increasing stature in Christ, and to your active exertions in his service. Besides the thirst of spiritual health and activity, ye will feel that of spiritual disease and temptation. But what a comfort is it to the afflicted Christian, that this thirst, how painful soever, is the forerunner and symptom of returning health and speedy deliverance! How comfortable to every thirsting soul among you who have come to Christ, and drunk of his Spirit, that he will abide in your hearts, guide you unto eternal life by his streams rising towards heaven, their source, and will be unto you an earnest of the bliss which he will there communicate, where, in a higher sense, "ye shall not thirst any more." For Jesus saith, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Our hearts would now reply, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." "Be it unto us, according to thy promise, Lord Jesus!" Amen.

SERMON X.

GEN. xxxii. 24—32.—"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And, when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank."

GREAT is the price of the prayer of faith,—it availeth much. Aware of men's proneness to be discouraged in prayer, and to discontinue it, our Lord spake a parable unto his disciples, that men ought always to pray, and not to be faint. In this similitude he shows, that the unjust judge avenges the poor widow, purely to avoid the trouble of her importunity; and hence he appeals to themselves, whether the just God will not grant the just requests, oft repeated, of the objects of his peculiar

love and care; " and, shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" Here the Spirit of God compares and contrasts God and his conduct to his people, with man, and his behaviour to his fellow-man and subject. In the passage read, he lets himself farther down; he actually condescends to become palpable to the senses of Jacob, and by conflict of body and spirit, he illustrates in a clear and impressive manner the prayer of faith, and many of its most interesting circumstances. Nor can our faith in this event be reasonably staggered by its marvellous nature, when we consider that it accords with his general plan of making himself known in the patriarchal and antediluvian times, and that it admirably contributes to prepare for the revelation of Jesus Christ in the fulness of time; the grandest demonstration of his own glorious perfections, and the grandest means of reconciling man to God, and conforming him to the image of his own holiness and happiness. Objections or difficulties of this sort will gradually diminish as we attentively consider the several parts of this wonderful story. I am persuaded they will be lost amid the light and comfort these will afford to the hearers of a spiritual frame of mind.

This passage presents a lively image of the season, the object, the nature, the success, the grateful memorial, and the divine outward evidence of the persevering prayer of faith.

I. This passage presents a lively image of the fit seasons of the prayer of faith. It was night, but the state of Jacob's affairs kept him awake. He had transported his family across the ford of Jabbok, into Canaan, and in an order suited to his apprehensions of danger from an expected meeting with Esau. Having taken these precautions, which still left him a portion of the night, he had recourse to God, in meditation and prayer, as to his only, his all-sufficient guardian and guide, who had never failed him on the most trying occasions, who had always gone beyond his expectations. Night recalls the obligations of the day, and presses on our consideration our peculiarly interesting state in sleep, in which we are so helpless and exposed, and from which we may never open our eyes on this world; and impious and unfeeling must the heart be that can disregard this solemn call to evening prayer. When sleep is withdrawn from the eyelids at the accustomed season, especially when the darkness of the night is rendered more solemn, and its gloom more oppressive to the heart, by the additional thick clouds of trouble and sorrow, how wise, how refreshing, to realize the glorious presence of Him who appointeth these, who overruleth them for good, who can give a song even in this night of unusual horror, and with a "let there be light," can, at his pleasure, make the morning spring up with its joys! The procedure of Jacob on this occasion deserves our notice and our imitation. As

the time was urgent, he takes every prudent precaution for the safety of his family, and then he retires to this extraordinary exercise of devotion. Unless we imitate him in the due and seasonable arrangement of our ordinary or urgent affairs before our solemn applications at the throne of grace in the evening or midnight hour of prayer, we lay a snare for our souls, and disqualify ourselves for enjoying the comfort of a united heart while we worship, and unfit ourselves for the reception of the very favours we supplicate. By imitating him, the world can be more easily shut out; we prove our sincerity by doing what God requires us to do, and waiting on him only for what he hath promised to perform; and we are in readiness spiritually and in respect to our affairs to avail ourselves of the additional grace he may vouchsafe.

II. This passage directs our attention to the great object of the most enlightened prayer of faith. God alone is entitled to this worship, for he is God, and besides him there is no other God. God alone can duly regard our prayers; for who knoweth all the wishes of all hearts lifted up to him throughout the world; or who can grant their desires but the Lord, who filleth all space, who searcheth all hearts, and with whom all things are possible? And, blessed be his name, he hath made himself known unto us, as the "hearer of prayer." On the one living and true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our views

terminate, and to him are supplications addressed in prayer. Yet how shall guilty men in the body realize and approach with the confidence of prayer the incomprehensible, the invisible, the holy majesty of an offended God? The experience of Jacob obviates this difficulty, and makes plain this mystery of so great practical importance. Observe how his antagonist in this struggle is introduced—"there wrestled a man with him;" and observe how Jacob speaks of this man,—"I have seen God, face to face." Had not God condescended to meet the patriarch in the form of a man, Jacob would not have ventured to strive with him for the mastery; and had not the patriarch been convinced that God was in this man, he would not have addressed to him his prayer, which is an act of divine worship. The manifestations of himself in human shape or in angelic form to Abraham, and even to Jacob himself, perhaps prepared the patriarch for the right understanding of this manifestation of God from the first, and for a ready compliance with the will of the heavenly visitant to wrestle with him on some ground not mentioned, but suited to the circumstances, and worthy of the divine challenger. At any rate, he knew before the termination of this mystical contest, and we know still farther from the testimony of the prophet Hosea, xii. 3, 4, 5, that this man was "the angel" of the covenant,—even "the Lord God of Hosts;" we know still farther and more clearly, that this is "the man foretold to

be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm,"—" that this is the second man, the Lord from heaven,"—" who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." From the beginning of the recovery of fallen man, penitents addressed supplications to God through faith in the coming seed of the woman, the promised Redeemer signified by sacrifices for sin; and Messiah, the Son of God, often assuming the human shape, superintended and advocated the cause, and accepted the worship of his ancient church, " till, in the fulness of time, he came forth, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." " And," adds the apostle, addressing true Christians, " because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." With what precision does the exercise of Jacob set forth this mystery of the only acceptable way of worshipping in prayer our revealed God! And yet, how far does our knowledge of it rise above his in clearness and fulness! Alas! that our faith is so little proportioned to our privileges, is so weak compared with that of Jacob! And what hinders, by faith, to lay our hand upon the man Jesus,—coming forth,

not in the darkness, but in the noonday that reveals his grace and truth,—coming forth, not to wrestle with us, but for us with God,—and to wrestle with God, dwelling in him, reconciled by his sacrifice for those blessings we need, and he hath purchased? What hinders, that, resting on him, and enjoying the privilege of younger brethren, we derive from him a liberal portion of his own holy Spirit of sonship? What hinders to pour out our hearts to the great object of worship, with the holy and humble confidence of children to a father, able and ready to help us? It is God Almighty, the hearer of prayer, to whom we pray; it is through Jesus Christ, whom he heareth always, we come to him; and it is by his own holy Spirit, helping our infirmities, and teaching how and what to pray for, we make our solemn approaches to the most high and holy One.

III. We have a lively representation of the nature of the prayer of faith. The obligation of prayer is not felt, and, consequently, the very form of prayer is neglected, by some. The pressure of affliction, feared or suffered, compelleth others to send forth occasional cries of distress; or the greatness of deliverance excites them to send forth shouts of praise, that evaporates in the shouts. Not a few are regular in repeating their form of supplication and acknowledgments, or some cold and languid petitions—too feeble, too earthy, to ascend to the

heavenly regions, where stands the throne of grace. But how few are experimentally acquainted with that spiritual exercise set forth by Jacob's wrestling with "the Lord of Hosts," in the form of "a man!" Thus, the prophet Isaiah thought of his contemporaries, when he asserts, unto the Lord himself, "There is none," comparatively, "that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold on thee." Would we enjoy a portion of Jacob's blessing, we must, according to our measure, imitate Jacob's holy striving with the Lord in prayer. We must seek to see his face, to realize his presence; for this is implied in the action; and what conflict could there be with an absent God? We must "take hold of him;" we must so embody the divine perfections set forth in the promises, as that we can not only discern them by sight, but by the touch, as it were,—as that we can seize thèm with a firm grasp,—as that we can embrace, with the arms of a spiritual wrestler, Emmanuel, withstanding our desires and endeavours. God authorizeth us, and therefore, I may add, we must wrestle with the Author of being and blessing; we must, "with vigour and activity, with attention and unwearied unremitting exertion, persist in prayer, amidst delays, alarms, discouragements, and opposition from every side." It is when the godly thus stirreth himself up—"stirreth up the grace that is in him," and stirreth up the actual grace derived from God, through the vigorous improvement of that already

possessed,—it is then God seemeth as if he saw that he prevaileth not against him. And when God sees that he prevaileth not against us, but we persevere in the struggle, it is then he checks the impetuosity of prayer, by "touching the hollow of the thigh"—by touching and dislocating some principal joint of our hitherto victorious, and now supposed irresistible, frame of prayer; convincing us impressively of his own sovereign power restrained from crushing so puny an antagonist; convincing us of the origin of that strength by which we have so wonderfully maintained a contest so unequal; convincing us of our own absolute weakness and sinfulness, that hath brought God down into such a depth of humiliation, to try, instruct, and chasten, in blessing us, and that dishonoureth and subjects us to the just displeasure of God, even while engaged in this great and honourable conflict. What is to become of the maimed combatant, destitute of strength, with his face covered with confusion, his heart filled with dreadful alarms? Shall he despair? Yes, of his own strength; and then his weakness becomes his strength: he hath recourse to those lamentations and entreaties that flow from his sin, from his misery, from his helplessness, which move the God of compassions, which relax the vigour of his resistance, and melt him into the tenderness that encourageth perseverance, and precedeth a full and gracious compliance with the fervour of importunity. "It was when Jacob wept and made supplication," that God condescended to

ask of him, saying, " let me go;" and condescended to reason with him on the propriety of granting his request, adding, " for the day breaketh," when he should mind his business, look after his family, and begin his journey. It is when we mourn before him after a godly sort, and fall at his feet, embracing his knees, beseeching him that he will lay aside the sternness of resistance, and the bitterness of rebuke and reproach, such as he addressed to the woman of Canaan,—that he will more gently try us " farther" by a delay to yield, that seems to intimate a request to let him go, and by the approach of some important duties of our station, that seem to render it reasonable. But this juncture is of the last importance; this is the decisive moment—the hinge of the victory. Faith perceives it, and puts forth its utmost vigour to retain its hold of the Hearer of prayer; and puts forth a cry, which hath not only entered the ears, but penetrated and dissolved into an overflowing fountain of love, the heart of the Lord God, merciful and gracious,—" I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This is " the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man," and it " availeth much;" and concerning its efficacy David saith unto him who heard him, " In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."

IV. We have here an image of the success of the prayer of faith. The prophet Hosea tells us, that

"Jacob, by his strength, had power with God; yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed." His success was, however, quite agreeable to the fixed maxims of the covenant of grace relative to prayer, as will appear from the narrative of the inspired Moses under consideration. Here we find no encouragement to expect things which God hath not promised; here we find the ground and extent of expectation to be the same entertained by him who leaned on the bosom of Jesus, and by his enlightened children in the Lord; and this is the confidence we have in him, "that if we ask any thing agreeable to his will, he heareth us." When the angel "made as if he would have gone farther" in his resistance, and Jacob "constrained him" to stop, as we have seen, he conferred on him distinguished marks of honour; he consigned to comparative forgetfulness his name, which continually reminded him of his duplicity to his father, and of his supplanting his brother; and gave him a new name, which should become renowned as the national name of his family in all generations, and descriptive of all spiritual and fervent worshippers of God to the end of the world. Instead of Jacob, he is henceforth to be called "Israel—a prince with God;" because, saith the angel to him, "as a prince hast thou power with God and with man, and hast prevailed." This was not only an honourable and permanent badge of the divine approbation of his present fair, courageous, and heroic contest, but a

pledge, that, from this time, he will contend in this spirit, and prove equally victorious. And what more seasonable than this significant title of nobility, when he is proceeding to meet with a brother, now as powerful as he was revengeful at their parting? Nor is this an honour in which any of the fervent in prayer are not partakers, in the day when "the Lord heareth their weeping cries." Then he acknowledges them to be heirs of Jacob, and of his spiritual honours; he blots out the memorial of their former trespasses, so that they shall no more feel the charge of their guilt and shame; and he gives them a new name—princes with God—which ennobles them, and raises high above the princes of the earth, in solid, permanent, and exalted dignity, and which shall animate them with the pure and glorious ambition of finally overcoming in the good fight of faith, and of sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. The sovereign who would bestow honours, that raise a valiant subject above his fellow-soldiers, and animate with a desire to maintain the dignity of these titles, and to establish his claim by greater feats in arms, and would withhold the affluence that correspondeth to the rank and spirit of the ennobled person, would but mock him, and expose his own malignity or indiscretion. But the wisdom and justice of God excel those of the best of princes as much as doth his munificence: therefore, when Jacob receives his titles of nobility, he receives also

" the blessing of God, that maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow."

Alas! brethren, how inconceivable are our sinful infirmities; how do they manifest themselves in situations the most opposite; how do they taint the services the most holy—offerings presented to God himself! If God frown on us, immediately our heart fainteth; and if he give unusual countenance, even in prayer, we grow forward, we become impertinently curious, we would know " the hidden things of God." No sooner had God intimated his success to Jacob, than he " asked him," in a spirit not to be indulged, " tell me, I pray thee, thy name." Jacob knew this was God, or he never would have said unto him, " I will not let thee go, till thou bless me"—till thou confer blessings on me, which a man, as thou outwardly seemest to be, which an angel, than which thou art greater, seeing thou hast dislocated my joint, without pain, and preserved my strength, cannot bestow. Tell me, I pray thee, O man to my sight and touch, and yet God in my experience of thy power and grace; tell me what thy peculiar title, thy descriptive name, is, that I may remember and honour thee accordingly. The time for revealing this grand mystery more particularly was not yet come: this was a petition that even a prince with God was not authorized to make: this was a secret, with the more accurate knowledge of which even he who was acquainted with so much of the counsel of God is not to be intrusted. " Wherefore,"

saith the Lord unto him, "wherefore is it that thou doest ask after my name?" This is an appeal to him, that he knew sufficiently that he was God manifested under a human shape,—that he could have no satisfactory ground for pushing his inquiries concerning this mystery beyond the limits God himself had marked by his condescension,—but that, while he checks curiosity after knowledge not necessary, yet will he strengthen faith, reward exertion or hope, and animate gratitude, by the undoubted bounties of the Lord of Hosts. "And he blessed him there." God grants him the first and most important matter of his petition; he bestows on him the crown for which he had wrestled, with the heavenly treasures every way fitted to support the honours of it; and he does this immediately—he does it on the very spot—marked by the effects of the glorious conflict. What this blessing implied is easily ascertained. At Bethel, as Jacob fled into Padanaram, God entered into a personal covenant with him, containing the blessings bestowed on Abram, together with some others peculiar to himself; and Jacob accepted this as his great charter for all that is good for him and his on earth, and all that is desirable in eternity. In acknowledging all his mercies, he refers to this as the pledge and provision of them; and, in all his trials, he recalls this for his encouragement, and employs it as the argument and subject of his prayers to God. On the evening of this very night we find the patriarch employing the provisions of that cove-

nant as his plea with God for the deliverance of himself and his family out of the hands of the fierce and wrathful Esau, that they may inherit the promises; and doing this with a skill and eloquence that eminently bespeak the presence and powerful working of the Spirit of grace and supplications. And, in the course of this very striving with God in prayer, he shows that this was his confidence towards God, and the very end of his spiritual and corporeal struggle, when he says, "I will not let thee go, till thou bless me." When God "blessed him there," he answered his petitions, and renewed the blessings of Bethel, Gen. xxviii. 13—15; he renewed his assurance of his inheriting the blessings of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,—of his unalienable right to the land of Canaan for his posterity,—of the safety and amazing increase and celebrity of his family,—of these being blessed, and proving a blessing to all the nations of the earth, by the promised Saviour to be born of them,—and of his continued presence, and protection, and spiritual influences, until he fulfilled all his promises unto him.

What thanks do we owe God for the clear and full revelation of "God manifest in the flesh" which we enjoy! We know his name, and his name Emmanuel is our boast. But, if favoured with occasional and peculiar nearness to God, "in labouring fervently in prayer," have we never indulged some impertinent and presumptuous curiosity about his generation or hypostatical union, which God hath not declared,

and the prophet asks, "Who can declare?" Or, if there have been no such temptation, have gifts not necessary at the time, to say the least, attracted our undue regard and wishes? And by withholding them from us, hath not the Lord rebuked our temerity and shown our unreasonableness, as if he had said, Wherefore ask ye this? With regard to essential blessings, have we not ground to praise the Lord for his great liberality in the season of extreme need, and in answer to earnest supplication, particularly on some memorable occasions? Have not light, and love, and strength, and peace, been sweetly and powerfully imparted by revealed truth being presented to the mind in the light of God's grace at the very time of supplication? And, if our deliverance referred to something future, have not the enlargement of soul, the gracious importunity of prayer, and the holy tranquil resignation of ourselves into the hand of God, assured us from God of the success of our wrestlings—assured us of the very blessing desired, or of something infinite grace and wisdom deem better for us? "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication.—For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."

V. We are presented with an image of the grateful memorial of the prayer of faith answered. The law of gratitude, and the exercise of trust in God

which is strengthened by experience of past goodness, oblige us to lay up his favours in our heart; our proneness to forget benefits which renders necessary the means of preventing this baseness, or of awakening from the disgraceful slumber of ingratitude, or sensibly and fearfully witnessing against it; and the influence of example, which operates in a salutary manner on the minds of both the friends and enemies of God—all these call to erect some outward and permanent memorial of God's merciful and signal interposition in answer to prayer. This was practised by the best men under the Mosaic and patriarchal dispensations, in a way very effectual and agreeable to the simplicity of these early times. The Philistines had encamped against Israel on the very spot where they overthrew them with a loss of four thousand slain not long before; Samuel, having offered sacrifice, cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him,—and there destroyed a great number of their inveterate enemies by a thunder-storm; after which the Israelites attacked and pursued them with immense slaughter. The deliverance, so accurately corresponding to the supplication, following so soon after, and effected in such a way, and in a place that inspired the enemy with insolent confidence, and Israel with dismay, could not but be acknowledged as a remarkable answer to prayer, and meritorious of a conspicuous memorial. Accordingly, the prophet "took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called

the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." A remarkable stone, undecaying, considered as sacred and not to be removed, and bearing a name commemorative of a singular transaction that was there effected, became a sure and permanent memorial in ages where time produced few external changes in the country, and nations were peculiarly careful of traditions, especially of those honourable to themselves. And as a memorial of this amazing manifestation of God unto him, Jacob called the place where he enjoyed the honour, " Peniel"—that is, the face of God ; and he assigns the reasons of the name, " for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Jacob erects a memorial to the admirable condescension of God, " for I have seen God face to face." This expression can mislead no one acquainted with the Jewish and Christian belief, that " no man hath seen God at any time, neither can see him." To all such it accurately conveys Jacob's idea of a singular manifestation of his gracious presence under a human form ; while to the Christian it presents the lively image of " the brightness of the Father's glory, of the express image of his person," " declaring him" in this extraordinary manner to the patriarch. This is the honour he wishes to perpetuate, not as merited by any worth of his own, not as called for by any claim he had on God, but as flowing from pure sovereign mercy, and accompanied and distinguished in its communication by this attribute, so

dear to the soul lamenting its own sinfulness—"for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Instead of commemorating his own triumph, at least his success, in this conflict, he commemorates God's glorious majesty, and his own littleness; God's unspeakable compassion, and his own gratitude for deliverance from the death which he deserved, and had reason to apprehend in the presence of the holy Lord God. The record was lasting; for the Sacred History long after speaks of Peniel, and of men who derived their name from it; though it has not been as effectual in promoting fervency of prayer as Jacob desired. All of us who have prayed successfully in great emergencies may not have a title to call the place of "groanings, that cannot be uttered," "Peniel, the face of God;" but surely we were bound, there and then, to have set up our "Eben-ezer, hitherto hath the Lord helped." Though we may not have been inattentive to this profitable duty, surely there are more, many more, days and places than those marked by us, in which we could say, In this spot and at this hour the Lord sustained me—in that retirement and season the Lord wrought deliverance for me that filled my heart with gladness—in yonder field of conflict, and at the moment now returned, he answered my prayers, not in the way I expected, but "by fearful things in righteousness." Ah! why are we so often cast down, so overcome by trials, so distant and doubtful, and slavishly afraid, but

because we have not been so careful as became us to note the grace of God in reply to our supplications when manifested, and to review them frequently with renewed affection? For the same cause we have deprived ourselves of the assistance which our friends in the Lord, intrusted with tokens of his kind regard to our petitions, might have ministered unto us at those times in which we have been "walking in darkness," and ill qualified to judge of our own state. Happy they whose communion with God hath been such as to authorize and constrain them to erect some public memorial in honour of the grace, and might, and faithfulness of the Hearer of prayer! Many shall see it, and fear, and believe, and turn unto the Lord; many of "the humble shall see it and be glad," with that gladness which aboundeth unto prayer, as well as unto praise.

VI. The outward evidence of communion with God furnished by himself, with sovereign wisdom and grace, requires our attention. "And, as he passed over Peniel, the sun rose on him, and he halted on his thigh." The sun rose to alleviate the sorrows of some sad heart greatly aggravated by the darkness, and to harmonize with the spiritual gladness of those rejoicing in the Lord. In the soul of Jacob, on whom the rising sun beamed less sweetly than the light of God's countenance, the delightful unison of nature and grace was complete. This was too much to be enjoyed without alloy; yet

the infusion, though bitter, shall be no less salutary than the sweet, for such is the grace and skill of our infallible physician. Jacob was leaving Peniel, his own memorial, behind, and was in some danger of questioning the reality of a scene so wonderful, or of being exalted above measure, through the intimacy and fulness of communion with God. He who admitted him to the privilege, arms him against the temptations to abuse it. Jacob, who felt no impediment in his conflict, now that he is going away with the grateful swell of triumph in his bosom, with the wreath of victory on his brows, while the rays of the morning clothe nature in beauty, and awake her liveliest varied song in honour of him whom God delighteth to honour, now "halteth on his thigh." The well-formed Jacob is lame: he, who moved with graceful vigour in the active duties of a laborious life, "halteth." Why should I bewail my infirmity? It is an abiding witness that I saw God face to face, and am not deceived by some vain dream of the night. How should I be lifted up before God on account of having prevailed over the angel, while I carry about with me this humiliating token of my entire obligation to divine grace? How should I be cast down before men for this lameness, so offensive to inconsiderate vanity, while I bear it about as the honourable wound received in the most honourable conflict? Can I ever forget, or remember with unmoved mind, the wondrous manifestation of the divine

majesty, compassion, and faithfulness enjoyed by me, while this remembrancer is ever near, ever pleading the cause of gratitude with such melting force, how far distant soever I may be from Peniel, my own memorial of this transaction? Reverses I must experience—I, who walk on the mount of heavenly vision and human prosperity, may soon be plunged into the very depths of outward affliction and of spiritual distress; but shall I ever unbelievingly suspect God hath cast me off, while I can present to him this memorial of his gifts and calling which are without repentance—this pledge of his "covenant with me, which is in all things well ordered, and sure"—this monument of his loving-kindness and tender mercies which endure for ever? Assuredly, the honour and advantages of this lameness shall far more than compensate for the privations and inconveniences it will occasion me; and, instead of injuring the interests of my posterity, by limiting my exertions for them, it will be commemorated by the latest of them as reflecting honour on them, sealing the family privileges unto them, and as exciting them to imitate the faith, and courage, and perseverance of their ancestor.

In precisely the same way God dealt with the apostle Paul, "caught up into Paradise." "Lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations, there was given to him a thorn in the flesh,"—some corporeal infirmity. He persisted in prayer for the removal of it, as an ob-

struction to his ministerial labours, till the Lord acquainted him with the use of it to himself, and promised to do more than compensate the natural tendencies of it by his almighty grace. Then, instead of desiring to be delivered from this ungraceful weakness and impediment in his toilsome work, he says of it, " most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me,"—" for, when I am weak, then am I strong." In the same way he deals with his people after having yielded to their importunate supplications. For what are ye habitually and fervently importunate in prayer? Is it not that ye may seek and see the face of God, be admitted into the secret of the Lord, more fully grow in the love and likeness of God, " strengthened with all might according to his glorious power?" Hath not God answered these supplications? No doubt, you asked these along with present comforts; and, though you asked earthly goods only in submission to the will of God, did not the event prove that you secretly hoped God would leave your gourd untouched, and fulfil your desires by the mighty operations of his Spirit, through the sweet constraining influences of his love? But is this the way in which he has complied with your petitions, yielded to your wrestlings? Will not some of you testify he hath humbled pride, weaned from self and the world, brought nearer himself in knowledge and conformity, and taught to rest on himself more

simply and with meeker submission, by laying open unto us the hidden evils of the heart, by permitting Satan to agitate you as a grain of sifted wheat, by laying his own hand on your dearest enjoyments, and letting in an agonizing sense of sin; which make you to go bowed down, which make you halt as you walk, which have made your eyes dim, which have weakened you in the way, which have deprived you of the desire of your eyes, which have caused you to sit solitary where you were wont to be encircled by countenances that reflected affection and delight, which have removed from you the affluence that engendered new desires with new cares, that swallowed up time and much of the regard due to God, and confounded you with and almost conformed you unto the world? Has he not chastised our overweening love of the creature, our rebellious resistance to his seeming will, our dishonourable distrust of him, our vain expectations in life, by granting to our incessant and clamorous importunity the life of the beloved object in danger, but so grievously marred in body or mind, or in both, as to compel us to "cease from man," to renounce all confidence in the flesh, to commit ourselves and ours into the hands of our faithful Creator, with a measure of cheerful unreservedness formerly unknown?

How precious is the Christian privilege of prayer! To know that God is the hearer of prayer, is to know there is a remedy for all the ills to

which we are liable, is an encouragement to apply for that remedy, with the certainty of obtaining it. When we know God is the hearer of prayer, if we are conscious of blindness, we know where to go for sight,—if conscious of guilt, where for the full remission of sin,—if conscious of inveterate corruption, for power to create us anew after the image of God,—if conscious of infirmity and sorrow, beyond the help of creatures, we know where to go for grace to help in every time of need, and according to the full extent of our need. Our necessities may be pressing, so as to admit of no delay; they may come upon us in the most unexpected way and season; they may surprise us in places the most remote from human aid; but there is no time, there is no place in which we are shut out from the presence of the hearer of prayer,—there is no time, no place in which we are not invited to come, and, without the chilling formalities of a court, pour out the inmost thoughts, the most fervent desire of our hearts, before the throne of grace. It is lamentable to think how little this invaluable privilege is proved by the children of God themselves. Should it not excite to pray without ceasing,—to pray at stated seasons, to pray on uncommon occasions, prosperous or adverse,—to pray in a sentence, which finds its way from amid the hurry of business, the scorching of fiery trials, the waters of affliction rushing into the soul, up before God as a memorial of singular efficacy,—to maintain the frame of

prayer, even of humble and grateful dependence on God at all times? Let not the sense, the afflicting sense of our darkness in respect of God, our distance from him, our unworthiness of his least favour, our deserving his wrath and righteous judgment; let none of these, let not all these together, restrain from the attempt to approach God, and pour out our hearts before him. As the hearer of prayer, he is God in Christ Jesus, seated on a throne of grace, —God who hath received the atonement in the blood of the Redeemer, and can be just and merciful to the chief of sinners approaching him, under a sense of his own need, and of God's all-sufficiency, —God who hath brought himself near to the remotest, and is dispelling the dark cloud of awful majesty that concealed, and softening the splendours of the divine glory that would dazzle the weak eye, and manifesting himself in our nature,—God who hath been sought in circumstances the most appalling to the guilty heart, and who hath never shut his ear against the cry of the needy, or sent the poor suppliant empty away. Should not this attraction powerfully draw us, and draw us often into the presence of God, that we may honour his condescension, and avail ourselves of the riches of his glory in Jesus Christ? He must be blind to his own interests, he must be most criminal, he must forfeit many blessings, and draw down many heavy curses, who lives in the habitual neglect of this privilege; but what a frame of mind is suitable to

intercourse with God, is necessary to successful supplication to the high and holy One? We must be on our guard against our natural backwardness to this exercise, and stir up our souls and all that is within us to discharge it. We must not be contented with feeble and distant apprehensions of God, but must substantiate the presence of his glorious majesty, and "lay hold on him" as our gracious, our only deliverer, with the embrace of faith and entreating reverence. We must not be discouraged by seeming refusals, we must not be intimidated to let go our hold by seeming efforts to shake us off and even cast us from him, but must cling to him, and put forth the whole strength of vigorous belief, and the death-grasp of invincible perseverance. Where God gives the heart and the strength to maintain this fearful yet friendly contest with himself, he never withholds the prize of the prayer of faith. You may not receive it at the time; you may not receive the very thing you pray for; or you may receive it in a way very different from what you expected, very opposite to the desire of flesh and blood: but ye who pray and do not faint will, in God's time, and in God's way (which, whatever we may think of them at the time, must assuredly be the very best), receive a blessing suited to your need, it may be, great, "above what ye could ask or think." "The Lord is rich in mercy to those who call on him;" and, inestimable as are the gifts of God already received in answer to prayer,

who among you can calculate the riches of the divine treasury, opened up to him who calleth on the Lord in truth,—to him who wrestleth with him, and will not let him go till he hath blessed him? Be not surprised if the blessing come with some sharp accompanying trial. God sees this needful to prevent the abuse of grace itself. Be not surprised, if ye have prevailed in wrestling with the Lord for a blessing, that you halt in some respect to the day of your death. Be not surprised, if ye have been caught up into the third heaven in your communion with God, that you receive a thorn in the flesh, not to be removed on your repeated and earnest supplications. Be contented, in these circumstances, with your Lord's assurance, " my grace is sufficient for you, my strength shall be made perfect in your weakness." And O forget not any of the Lord's benefits,—especially any of those bestowed in answer to your prayers. How sweet and precious is the answer of prayer, which enlisteth some in aid of faith! In the languor of affection, awake and animate love by the record of blessings received in answer to prayer. In the depths of spiritual distress, imbittering outward afflictions, remember the works and deliverances of his almighty arm, guided by love that is sovereign, and faithfulness that faileth never; and be not dismayed, but still hope in the Lord, the health of your countenance and your God. Set up your Eben-ezer, and look to it often, that you may render unto God the glory due to the

answerer of prayer; set up your Eben-ezer, and point to it in the midst of the social circle, that they too may help you to make God's praise glorious. But who is sufficient for any of these things? No one of himself; and yet every one, the most illiterate, the most limited in intellectual endowments, who is taught of the Spirit of God. The Lord the Spirit is good, and he commendeth his goodness to us, by revealing himself as "the Spirit of grace and supplications." Let us render unto him the honour due to him, in his peculiar office in the covenant of grace; let us continually supplicate his influence as the source of every thing good found in any renewed creature, and this especially, that he may help our infirmities in prayer, that we may know what we should pray for as we ought, and that he may make for us intercessions, with groanings which cannot be uttered.

SERMON XI.

LUKE xvii. 32.—"Remember Lot's wife."

THERE is a time when the cry of a nation's sins ascendeth unto the Lord, when he waits not for the more slow destruction of a people effected by universal depravity of manners, when he sends destruction as a whirlwind, and makes them "an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolation." This time was at hand, in respect to the inhabitants of Judea, when our Lord uttered the words of the text. They had forgotten both "the goodness and the severity of God" towards their nation. They had slain his prophets, they had made his law of none effect by their vain tradition; and, to crown their wickedness, they were despising, rejecting, persecuting, and about to crucify, his own Son. A destruction the most awful was preparing for them. In the prospect of this event, our Lord gives to his followers the instructions necessary to their escape from the impending evils. He forewarns them of the rapid and unexpected approach of the judgment, ver. 24. He guards them against being lulled into security by the peace and prosperity, the mirth and worldly-mindedness, of the

nation. Instead of promising safety, these proclaimed ruin to a country. Such carelessness and avarice, such dissoluteness and hardness of heart, preceded the perdition of the old world, and of the cities of the plain, ver. 26-29; and such would precede the just indignation of God, to be poured out on the land of Judea. Having thus prepared his disciples to expect this national punishment, our Lord directs them how to avoid the calamities of it when begun, by immediately abandoning their goods and their companions who would not accompany them, and fleeing without delay to some remote place. And, as example is fitted to make the most deep and lasting impressions on the human mind, Jesus sums up, embodies and enforces his admonitions in the words of the text,—"Remember Lot's wife;"—avoid her sin, that ye may avoid her punishment, in circumstances which are strikingly similar.

Lot was nephew to Abraham, and probably brother to Sarah. He had removed with his uncle, on the call of God, from his native country Chaldea, to the land of Canaan. Increasing prosperity, in course of time, required more room for their flocks and their herds, and obliged them to separate their families. Lot rashly availed himself of the condescension of Abraham, in permitting him to choose the place of his residence; and with the taste and discernment of a young man, fixed on the district near Sodom. This was a great plain, rich in beauty and fertility, and containing five considerable towns, in-

habited by a people, idle, luxurious, and proud, through the abused advantages of their situation. At last their crimes became gross and shocking, so shameless and so universal, that five righteous persons could not be found in these five cities. Lot resided in Sodom, with his family, and was daily grieved with the abominations which he witnessed. At length the cry of these abominations pierced the ear of God, and drew down vengeance on the perpetrators. Jehovah appeared to Abraham, acquainted him with his design to destroy the cities of the plain, and, at his intercession, promised the safety of Lot and his family. Angels appeared to Lot also, and, by striking some of the vile inhabitants blind, as a punishment of their lust and bloody intentions, convinced him of their divine commission. They warned him of the desolation at hand, they commanded him and his family to flee to the mountains, without looking behind them, and at last they led them out of the devoted city. Before they had proceeded far, Lot's wife, in the face of the divine prohibition, "looked back," and was immediately turned into a pillar of salt,—a fit warning to the first Christians to flee from the destruction of Jerusalem without turning back,—a warning no less fit for us who "have named the name of Christ;" who have professedly fled from Sodom—from the world lying in wickedness, daily and hourly exposed to the eternal judgments of God; and who are still in danger of looking back to the region of sensual

delights with unholy affections, provoking God to confound us with the wicked in their condemnation.

Well, then, may we suppose our Lord addresseth us also in these words, "Remember Lot's wife." To remember, is to consider with suitable practical regard. It is thus, my young friends, that Solomon enjoins you,—"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." It is thus God commands his people,—"Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy." It is thus Christ requires professing Christians,—"Remember Lot's wife;" and it is thus I invite you to remember her religious profession—her sin—and her punishment.

I. "Remember" the religious profession of "Lot's wife." She had been the wife of Lot for twenty years before her death, and probably was a native of Sodom, as there is no notice taken of Lot's marriage at the time he chose to fix his residence in the city. That city, proverbial for its gross wickedness at the time it was destroyed, must have been rapidly exhausting the patience of God, who is slow to anger, long before this awful judgment. That she was educated with some regard to God, even in these circumstances, is probable,—that she seemed to be of another spirit than the generality of her fellow-citizens, the character of Lot obliges us to believe. Is it at all likely that this righteous man, who, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds, would choose,

for the partner of his heart and fortune, for the mother and guide of his children, one who gave no evidence of the practical fear of the Lord? By marrying Lot, she separated herself from her people and their unhallowed practices; she became the companion of her husband in the duties of religion, and the instructor of their offspring in the great leading truths of it, which distinguished their family from the citizens of Sodom.

No doubt Lot entertained an undue, though not predominating, love of the world, else he would never have been a citizen of that place; at least, he would not have long remained in such a sink of shameless iniquity; and, no doubt, his familiarity with vice, so long contemplated willingly, must have weakened his abhorrence of it. Still, the existence of true righteousness in him, and his soul vexed with the deeds of his neighbours, must have produced as much of the formal regard to religion in his family as we have represented. However coldly in truth, his wife must have seemingly sympathized with Lot, and maintained something of a suitable conduct in the discharge of her duties. Affection for him, and the great reverence paid to the head of a family in these days, rendered this natural and necessary. How she received the command to leave Sodom, about to be destroyed, and how far she contributed to that delay which caused the angel to drag the family away, as it were, we presume not to conjecture; but certain it is, she

abandoned her native city, the scene of infancy and youth, her friends, the companions of her early joys and sorrows, her domestics and ample fortune, and fled with her family from the wrath to be poured out on these dear objects, towards the mountains of refuge.

Who, that contemplates the conduct of this woman with an eye of charity, will not say her profession is good, for it is the faith of Lot and Abraham; her behaviour is consistent with her profession, and affords no ordinary proofs of sincerity and self-denial?

With such an eye must we observe the conduct of others, but with a very different eye must we scrutinize our own. Have we received and retained the religious profession of our parents, in the midst of relations, and companions, and friends, who look down with contempt, and pour out torrents of ridicule and abuse, on such a profession? Have we entered into the most sacred connexions with religious persons, knowing them to be so, and carefully conformed to their views and practice for many years? Have we forsaken friends, and abandoned prospects of fortune, for the society of the truly good, and for the protection of God, that could not be elsewhere so surely enjoyed? Have not some reason to accuse themselves, here, of falling far short of the profession of Lot's wife? Have not some resisted the impressions of early education, or soon effaced them, for the sake of engaging society

that could not endure them? Have none entered into the marriage state, without inquiring whether the consort feared or despised God; or satisfied with a slight investigation, or very dubious evidences; or knowing assuredly that the partner for life was no friend to the Lord Almighty, but trusting that they could effect a conversion, which belongs to that God who says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" 2 Cor. vii. 14, 15. Have none married to a religious consort, adhered to irreligious principles and unholy practices, though these are in opposition to example, and evidently vexatious to a righteous spirit?

Though we cannot accuse ourselves of any of these evil practices, though we can justify ourselves in regard to them all, we must go much deeper; we must try to penetrate the motives of this blameless profession. Are we sure that merely human affections have not produced all this? Are we sure that love and reverence for persons are not the sources of our regard to religious views and duties? Are we sure that mere dread of the divine wrath, and desire of the divine protection, are not the only affections of a religious kind which mingle with our relative affections, and give rise to our greatest exertions and sacrifices, apparently in the service of God?

Are we sure, in other words, that it is not self—self-gratification, or self-preservation, which is the sole spring of our religious profession? It is not slight reflections, or inquiries, or reasonings, that should determine a matter of so much difficulty, delicacy, and importance. You must search and try yourselves, with seriousness and impartiality, in the light of God's word, and in the exercise of much fervent prayer. Unless you discover that you are truly striving to please God, in the habitual actings of all your affections, and performance of all your duties; unless you are truly striving to do all this, in a dependence on the meritorious obedience and death of Christ for pardon and acceptance, and on the word and Spirit of Christ for the right and spiritual conduct of all, your profession rests on a sandy foundation, and some great trial is likely to overturn and sweep it away. When God and self are distinctly separated; when you can no longer divide your heart between God and mammon in appearance; when you can no longer halt betwixt Jehovah and Baal; when you must finally forsake the one or the other, then will ye discover the hitherto lurking, but actually governing, principles of your heart; then will ye surrender yourselves to their empire, and abandon your professed submission to God, as did the no less miserable than sinful wife of Lot. Gen. xix. 26. "His wife looked back from behind him."

II. Therefore, "remember" the sin of "Lot's wife." The angel had said to Lot and his family, when he brought them out of the city, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain;" but, it is afterwards said, "his wife looked back from behind him."

1*st*, This is an act of disobedience to the express command of God. Were we to consider the deed by itself, we would say it was natural and humane. To part from a city, in which she was probably born; from acquaintances and friends, on many accounts dear to her; and to part from them at the very moment of their destruction, without casting behind one longing, lingering look of heartfelt sorrow, would, in this view, have betrayed a censurable and savage insensibility. These reasonings, suggested by the heart, seem very plausible, very persuasive; but in this, as in many other instances, if we allow the heart to go before the understanding, and if we pronounce a decision according to the suggestions of it, we shall call "good evil, and evil good." There are actions which are indifferent in their own nature; but when God expressly commands or forbids them, obedience to the divine will is virtue or righteousness, and disobedience is vice or unrighteousness. Arbitrary as positive injunctions may seem at first sight, they are not more solidly founded in divine sovereignty, than in divine wisdom, and goodness, and holiness. We infer this from the perfect character of the author, and we

discover this by the faint light he is pleased to shed on these precepts. Was it more sovereign than gracious, and wise, and holy, to forbid Lot and his family to look back on Sodom in flames—to exact this homage of submission, well calculated to try their faith, to hasten their escape, to save them from the horrors of the sight—from the overwhelming anguish of commiseration, and which tended to detach their heart from a place rendered odious by so many crimes? When we consider these things, in connexion with the deliverance God was effecting for the family of Lot, what can we see in his wife's lingering and looking back, in the face of a command, and in the reception of great mercies, but high contempt of the divine authority, and base ingratitude for miraculous preservation, amid destruction so dreadful, so extensive?

Professing Christians, "remember" the disobedience of "Lot's wife" to the positive precept of God, and especially while distinguished by the divine favour. It is most heinous to violate those commands which God hath "written, not only with his finger on tables of stone," but by his creating Spirit also on the hearts of all men. Both divine and human enactments, supported by the abhorrence of mankind against the transgressor, protect these statutes. To the temptation to commit these universally esteemed gross vices, professing Christians seldom yield. But it is also very heinous to violate the positive precepts of God,—this, no less than im-

morality, sets at defiance and subverts the authority of the Lawgiver. Because men are less abhorrent of this species of disobedience, God has, from the beginning, set upon it the terrible marks of his signal displeasure. Observe the actions, indifferent in themselves, which God hath constituted virtuous or vicious by his declared will; and with what jealousy he hath guarded these commands, and avenged the violation of them. For eating of the forbidden fruit, God subjected Adam and all his posterity to labour, and sorrow, and death. For gathering a few sticks on the Sabbath, he commanded the delinquent to be stoned to death. For profaning the Lord's table, he punished the transgressors with weakness, and sickness, and death. And, for looking back to Sodom on fire, he turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt.

Let those conscious of the inclination, and even of the practice of trifling with and profaning God's positive institutions, lay these things to heart; let them tremble, seeing this is connected with the renunciation of allegiance to God, and the suffering of his indignation and wrath; let them be horribly afraid, because their sin is unspeakably more aggravated by the gospel deliverance which they profess to accept, than the sin of Lot's wife was aggravated by the temporal deliverance which God was, at the time of it, bestowing on her.

2d, Lot's wife was guilty of an impious curiosity. Painful and extraordinary objects, however unne-

cessary and improper to be looked on, excite a curiosity often culpable in the indulgence. Hence, the bloodless representations of the theatre, and the execution of criminals, are attended by crowds of spectators, not excluding delicate females. That this propensity, so singularly called into action, combined with other sinful motives, had prompted Lot's wife to cast an unduly inquisitive eye towards the scene of God's great and terrible execution of justice on guilty Sodom, is highly probable. There are manifestations of himself, on which God will not permit the eye of prying curiosity to be cast with impunity. If the Bethshemites thus look into the ark of the covenant, God instantly punishes a multitude of the impious gazers with death. If Lot's wife thus look back on the fiery judgment of the Lord, on the place of her late abode, she is rendered an immovable statue.

Remember the sin of immoderate unbridled curiosity. God has given you this active principle for the most useful purpose,—for the more easy acquisition of useful, ornamental, and pleasing knowledge; but, like all your other principles, it is vitiated and tending to some sinful excess even in the sanctified heart. Guard against the extinction of it by untoward circumstances, lest you remain in a state of childish ignorance and incapacity. Beware of indulging it, especially at the instigation of vanity and pride, lest you fastidiously neglect the lawful and the useful, and busy yourselves in prying into

the darkness "visible" of conjecture—nay, into "the hidden things of God." Is not that a "vain philosophy" which would fathom the infinite understanding of Deity with a finite line, which would explain these operations that he hath avowedly veiled from man? And how severely is it punished in the indulgence of its unwise desires—engrossed by useless, led away by impious, speculations, rejecting the truth and believing a lie in matters of the last moment! How fearful the condemnation that awaits them! Remember ye, that "secret things belong unto the Lord, but those which are revealed, unto us and our children." Carefully collect the facts which God hath placed within the reach of the diligent student of nature, and providence, and grace, and skilfully apply them to the purposes for which they are made known to us,—of revering, and loving, and serving God, in humility and in the way which he hath appointed; and leave the "how can these things be" in the mouth of those whose impious and senseless curiosity is as inconsistent with sound philosophy as with sound Christianity. If ever, in the vanity of your heart, you have, with Job, pryed into and pretended to penetrate "the ways of God which are in the deep waters," say with him better instructed, "Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered things which I understood not, things too wonderful, which I knew not." Then will ye, without sinful perturbation, receive the

mysteries of the unity and Deity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—of God's sovereignty and man's accountability—of the fall and universal depravity of man's nature—of the incarnation of the Son of God and the atonement in his blood—and of the regeneration by the Holy Ghost consistent with our nature and state. John iii. 7. Receiving these on the testimony of God who cannot lie, and knows the fittest time for letting us into a deeper insight of them, you may adopt the language of a truly wise man, since "he was a man according to God's own heart," "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me—I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace unto his people."

3d, Lot's wife was guilty of unbelief. She was not distant from Sodom. The troubled sky, the fearful sound of the falling storm, the horrid glare of reflected fire amid the gloom, might fill her with dread, lead her to suspect her danger, and to think of other means of safety than that contained in the divine promise—fleeing to the mountains. Perhaps she took that part of the promise which suited her inclination, the assurance of safety, and presumed this would be fulfilled though she should neglect the specified condition, and look behind her. In either case she was guilty of unbelief, and of unbelief of great criminal magnitude. By distrust she denied the wisdom of God to contrive suitable methods of

accomplishing the promise of safety, his power to fulfil, with his faithfulness to execute; and arrogated to herself perfections more worthy of trust than those of Deity. By presumption she separated what God hath joined, faith and obedience; she made God's promise the encouragement of sin in defiance of his own declaration, and in contempt of his holiness and majesty. This insulting unbelief, whether of distrust or presumption, was short-lived as it was daring. She denied the power of God to save her in the way of obedience, or his inclination to destroy in a course of disobedience; and he vindicated his perfections, by erecting her a monument of power and justice, avenging abused goodness.

Remember ye the sin of unbelief. It denies God, is the parent of sin, and the cause of divine judgments. Every act of unbelief is a limiting of the perfections of God, is saying that infinite is finite, that God is such a one as ourselves, that God is not God. Unbelief is the parent of all sin, of a degrading distrust of God's promise, which leads to trust in the creature, to use unlawful means, and to admit sinful troubles,—and of presumption, that lays hold of the covenant, that pleads gifts and privileges, that neglects obedience to the holy commandments, and after this expects salvation. The first cannot rise to God's excellence from criminal fearfulness; the second dares to look down upon and to vilify God's righteousness. Pray ye that the Spirit would fulfil in you the work of faith with power.

When assailed by fears, and sufferings, and dangers, sore and great, meditate on the truth and grace, might and wisdom of God, made sure to his people in the covenant, and exercised in all ages in behalf of those trusting in him, in behalf of Noah and Lot, David and Daniel; and for the punishment of those calling them in question—of the Israelites, who limited the Holy One and fell in the wilderness—and of Moses himself, who in one instance distrusted God, and was deprived of the honour of conducting his nation into the promised land. When tempted to indulge sin and presume on the mercy of God against his own declaration, meditate on the fate of the inhabitants of the old world, of the sons-in-law of Lot, who disobeyed God, hoped to find safety, and were involved in destruction amid their pernicious expectations. Wait for the fulfilment of the promise in the time and way of God's appointment, and ye shall not be ashamed. "Commit your way unto the Lord, trust in him, and he will bring it to pass."

4th, Lot's wife was guilty of immoderate attachment to the world. This appears from the charge our Lord gave to his disciples concerning their conduct at the destruction of Jerusalem. He exhorted them to beware of such an attachment to their property as would induce them to delay their flight, or to return after they had begun to flee, that they might carry it with them; because there would be both sin and danger in their action, a loving of the

world more than of Christ's commandment, and the certainty of falling by the hand of the enemy; and this exhortation he illustrates and enforces by the example of Lot's wife, who perished in looking back, with undue affection, on that city from which she had just escaped. Had she thought of her property lost, with grief moderated by the appointment of God, and of her companions and friends with anguish, allayed by gratitude that she and her family had been mercifully separated from their sins and their fate, she would have doubled her speed with downcast eye and supplicating heart, and would have survived the terrible calamity. But she looked back on the place where her treasures and her heart were, where were her earthly goods and pleasures, and the companions of her earthly joys, with unlawful desire and regret, and she perished, placing her life in things in which life consisteth not.

Remember, that if any man love the world, the love of God is not in that man. His body is indeed a temple, but not of God; for the world is the idol to which it is consecrated, and where it reigns with tyrannical sway. The love of the world sets the commands of God at defiance, extinguishes conjugal and maternal love, and blinds to the greatest and most imminent dangers. Remember, it bereaved our first parents of innocence, Dinah of chastity, and Achan of life; that it prevents multitudes from accepting the honour that cometh of God, and turned the wife of Lot into a pillar of salt. As professing

Christians, you have renounced the world, as to sinful pursuit and enjoyment; but so had Lot's wife. Does the world prevail on you to remain in situations in which ye cannot serve God according to your consciences? Does the world tempt you, by its gains, or pleasures, or honours, to neglect the serious study of the Scriptures, the cultivation of family religion, or regular attendance on public worship,—to pursue business, amusements, or sensual gratifications with avidity, and to involve yourselves in strifes and heart-burnings with your neighbours or relations? And when religion sets accurate bounds to the gratification of appetite and passion, does the world dispose you to reason and excuse, to dispute and contest, and to follow that course which taste, character, and society prescribe? Do ye conform to the practice of Christians, hold their language, and experience something like their sentiments, on some occasions; and after all, is the world, it matters not in what shape, uppermost in your practical judgment, in your affections, in your thoughts; and is your religion always regulated by the world, and not the world by your religion? In either of these cases, be sure that the world reigns over you, that the love of God is not in you, that you are not far from the fate of him "who will be rich" or great, or sensual, and who is at last "drowned in destruction and perdition."

5th and lastly, Lot's wife was guilty of total apostasy from God. "She looked back," actually

attempted to return as some think; and this supposition is countenanced by our Lord's words and their connexion with this act, "let him not return," says he, "to fetch his goods,—remember Lot's wife," who attempted to return, and perished in the attempt. Be this as it may, "looking back," in scripture language, is equivalent to turning back; because it is an expression of the choice made, which God considers as a commission of the deed. Luke ix. 62. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." This act of Lot's wife was not the effect of surprise, or fear, or any other powerful temporary temptation on a renewed heart; it did not resemble Peter's denial of his Lord; it was a consummating of the triumph of unholy principle, a full and entire renunciation of God, a determination to take her part with the world, even in misery, rather than with the children of God, if his favour is not to be enjoyed with the supreme love of the world. To this frightful frame of mind did the spirit of disobedience, impious curiosity, unbelief, and love of the world, indulged at this crisis, bring this unhappy woman.

It now appears that worldly affections and considerations had been the source of her religious profession. Well might Lot say, "she went out from us, but she was not of us; for if she had been of us, she would, no doubt, have continued with us." Love for her husband had persuaded her that she

loved his God. Reverence for him, too, as a righteous man, might lead her to " hear him gladly, and do many things" which he recommended. Fear of being destroyed, affection for her family, dragged her from Sodom, and in company with righteous Lot. Her heart had never been right with God. Long had he witnessed this, long had he borne with her hypocrisy, resisting the persuasions of his grace, and the terrors of his wrath. But now one decisive act discovers her real state—by it she throws off all professed regard to God, takes part with his enemies, and suffers along with them, yea, suffers more dreadfully than they. They grossly and openly sinned; they were utterly consumed, and their memory perished. She had professed to reverence God, to be of his people, while she was of his enemies; now she avows her enmity when God was demonstrating his jealousy for his honour, and he erects her a monument of his wrath.

Remember, then, the apostasy of Lot's wife. The seed of this crowning sin may lurk long in the heart, nursed by one or more indulged lusts not openly or generally offensive, may remain long concealed from the individual as from society, till some great heat of temptation summon forth its whole vigour, and produce it a full-grown tree, covered with its poisonous fruits. It is all one what the affection is that nourisheth it, if it only predominate. Persons professing godliness are too seldom afraid of apostasy, till they perceive gross vice and flagrant out-

rage. Those who are guilty of such offences are persons who cannot apostatize; they are already without and unconnected with Christ even by name. "He that thus openly worketh sin is of the devil" in the judgment of the church. Apostasy often originates in the love of the world, which shows itself at first in little things, which puts on a change of veils, clothes itself with so many seemly apologies, assumes so many virtuous titles, till it acquires strength to exercise the most absolute tyranny, to compel to throw off disguise, and to commit actions once the most hateful to the wretched apostate. What was the apostasy of Judas in its beginnings, save a seeming prudent care of the world? By and by, it became theft, murder of the Son of God, murder of himself in despair. And what has been the apostasy of all who have turned back and followed no more after Christ? at first but a little prudent concern about a competency, about character, about the cheerful enjoyment of the bounties of providence, or about decent consequence in society. By degrees this prudent concern about the world steals time, religious services, and ordinary duties of our station from God: at last, when great trials occur, this prudent concern openly sacrifices Christ to these idols, and delivers the apostate to their absolute sway.

Remember, then, the sin of Lot's wife, her contempt of the divine authority, her impious curiosity, her great unbelief, her love of the world, and her

apostasy from God. Remember these sins with abhorrence and holy fear: Remember how one act can express such complicated iniquity as the habit of the soul, and draw down the most signal judgments of God on the transgressor.

III.—" Remember" the punishment of " Lot's wife." Extraordinary punishments are now seldom inflicted on earth, because a future state of retribution is most clearly revealed. Still extraordinary punishments are inflicted on some extraordinary sinners, for purposes many of which are very obvious. To convince a guilty unthinking race that there is a God who rules and will judge in righteousness to check the headlong career of vice, and to support his oppressed or desponding people, God sees meet to hold up to the amazed world the dreadful fate of a Lot's wife, a Nebuchadnezzar, or a Herod: and he generally chooseth these examples from among those who have attracted notice by their prosperity, their mercies, their continued abuse of them, or by some single notorious outrage. Ps. xcii.

Though cut off by no unusual means, though not erected into fearful monuments of divine vengeance, yet are formal and apostate persons punished by death arresting them in their sin, in a way that bears no slight resemblance to the punishment of Lot's wife. She was cut off on the road leading to safety. The path of duty is the path to safety; but the way must be in the heart while the feet are

in the way. When this is not the case with professing Christians, and they begin to stand still, or begin to turn back, judgment overtakes them even in that path that leads others to safety. And what an aggravation to the misery of many, that had they been what they seemed, had they laboured as hard in sincerity as they did in formality, had they loved the ways wherein they walked, they would have been distinguished not by the wrath but the favour of God! What an aggravation to the misery of many, that they came so "near the kingdom of heaven," and would not enter in, after all the means employed to prevail with them! Lot's wife was cut off from her righteous husband, and from her children, who actually escaped the impending storm of indignation. And, how full of anguish is this circumstance, common to Lot's wife and many insincere professing Christians! They are outwardly joined with the righteous in privileges and natural affections; and they are joined with the wicked in the wrath executed on them. Though removed from Sodom, the fire that consumes Sodom overtakes them. Though separated from the wicked in respect to their gross outward offences, they are included in their condemnation. Though united to the righteous by ties the dearest, by blood, by employments, by social worship, "they are taken away" to the place of torment, and "the others are left" to ripen for glory, or to be immediately conveyed into it. Lot's wife was cut off in

the very act of sin, and without a moment's respite, —" she looked back, and was turned into a pillar of salt." There was no interval betwixt the sin and the punishment. The treasures of divine goodness had been poured out and abused. The patience of God was exhausted; justice demanded its lawful victim, and obtained it. With what horror of sin, especially " of the sin that easily besetteth us," should this inspire! Ah, it is a fearful thing to die after a short confinement on the bed of languishing that follows a long course of sin, carelessness, and mere formality in religion! Though these circumstances are far from hopeful, God is able, and God may work a saving change on the heart during this respite. Luke xxiii. 43. But to be cut off with the heart raging, with the hand lifted up against God, to be fixed, eternally fixed, in that frame and posture, and under all the woes connected with them—how tremendous beyond conception! And shall we, by wilful sin, expose ourselves to such a fate—subject ourselves to be enrolled with Nadab and Abehu, with Ananias and Sapphira, with Lot's wife, clinging to the world, and turned into a pillar of salt! Almighty Grace forbid! She perished with the wicked, and was distinguished by the severity of her punishment. " She looked back, and was turned into a pillar of salt." Whether she was converted into a rock of salt, or encrusted all over with that substance; whether this was effected by the immediate hand of God, or

by the shower of nitro-sulphureous matter that destroyed Sodom falling on her, we stay not to inquire. What is of importance for us to remember is, that Lot's wife was in the very act of complicated transgression arrested by the hand of God, and raised up a monument of the divine displeasure. In the same place, in the same attitude, she is said to have remained for ages, testifying that God vindicates the holiness and justice of his government. Modern apostates may not be exhibited for ages as a visible sign of God's wrath against abused mercy, but this does not destroy the resemblance between their punishment and that of Lot's wife. If they are not converted into pillars of salt, if they are not overwhelmed with showers of fire and brimstone here, they will hereafter be plunged into a lake of fire and brimstone, " the smoke whereof ascendeth up for ever and ever." Rev. xiv. 11.

The sum of what has been said is this,—there is no safety in Sodom, which is a state of nature, a state of sin, and necessarily of misery ; for what " is born of the flesh is flesh"—" is carnally minded, which is death." All in this state should incessantly cry for the renewing influences of that Spirit, of which if they are not born again, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God. But there is no more safety in an empty profession of religion, how strict soever the sect to which it is conformed : if persevered in, it inevitably involves in the condemnation of the

hypocrites; and it often leads to a full separation from the people of God, with whom they never had any spiritual, however close communion of another kind—it often leads to an awful apostasy, visited by the temporal and terrible judgments of God. 2 Peter ii. 20, 21.

How mournful the present state of our visible church! How does a spirit of unconcern about the life to come, and of avidity about the life that now is; how do dissoluteness and hardness of heart towards God prevail! Were not these the vices that prevailed before the old world was destroyed by the flood—before the cities of the plain were consumed by fire from heaven—before the country of Judea was laid waste by the Romans? And have not these vices been indulged amid the calamities of war, the downfal of empires, and our own singular merciful exemption from surrounding miseries? What reason have we to tremble and mourn before the Lord! What is your duty, your interest, who are living thus to yourselves, to the world, and not to God? Are ye about to be overtaken with a deluge of eternal wrath, and should ye not flee into the ark prepared for those ready to be thus overwhelmed? Is fire from heaven about to consume you while ye remain in the sinful society of those offending against God; and should ye not, without delay, escape to the city of refuge that God is pointing out, and earnestly

recommending? Should ye not submit yourselves to Jesus, who is able and willing to save you in the day of wrath? And is there a day or an hour to be lost? O for some friendly, some mighty angel, to take you by the hand, and to drag you, with holy violence, from the state of condemnation, and place you in a state of perfect security—place you under the guardianship of Emmanuel! In compliance with our commission, in dependence on the indispensable and promised grace of the Spirit, we attempt the discharge of our awful and important office, "we would snatch you as brands from the burning." Even of such fuel, seemingly prepared for fire eternal, God hath formed trees of righteousness, abounding in all the fruits of holiness.

Not a few, I trust, are fleeing for Zoar; but, alas! have not the swiftest, the steadiest in this flight, great reason for fear, and none for high-mindedness? What deeds of disobedience, of sinful curiosity, of unbelief and distrust, and of unlawful attachment to the world, still lurk in your hearts,—are still tempting you to linger in your course, to look back with a desire to retain what God removes, or to return back to the immoderate pursuit or enjoyment of the world? Great need have ye to repeat, "what shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Great need have you to strengthen your faith, by saying, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ."

Great need have you to pray, with David, dreading the sinful influence of the world, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness; turn away mine eyes from beholding vanities, and quicken thou me in thy way!"

Ah, my brethren, can we contemplate the fate of Lot's family with unmoved heart—with unmoistened eye? Is there no sympathy for a husband bereaved of his wife, for daughters bereaved of their mother, in this tremendous manner? Well might they, gazing on this newly-formed pillar, exclaim, as David exclaimed, contemplating the signal punishment of transgressors, "Our flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and we are afraid of thy judgments." Alas, God did not allow them even this melancholy pleasure of looking back on the pillar! And, while we sympathize with them, does no fearful apprehension rise, that some one of those dear to us—of those who have seemingly escaped from the pollutions of the world, should turn back into perdition? Intolerable thought! may it produce the most salutary effects on us and on our families! Let a holy concern for each other occupy our bosom! Let us watch for opportunities of promoting the eternal welfare of each other. Let us "exhort one another daily, lest we should be misled, and hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." And, if circumstances forbid these means, as they sometimes do, let us, by our example of piety and charity—of

meekness, and hatred of sin; let us, especially, by our secret, and frequent, and fervent prayer, seek the salvation of our beloved relatives. "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband; or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

SERMON XII.

EPHESIANS v. 25—27.—"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."

THE ends of Christ's mediation are, to reconcile God to sinners, and sinners to God, by his atoning blood; and to restore to the reconciled the image of their Maker, lost by the fall. Christ is not more earnest in inculcating faith in the first on sinners, than in inculcating compliance with the last on believers. He purchased the first at the dearest price, and he exhibits himself as the living pattern of the last in human nature. Rom. viii. 29. In this passage, by his inspired ambassador, he enjoins husbands to love their wives, and presents his own love to his people as their consummate model. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."

In attempting to illustrate the example of Christ, I consider, 1*st*, The love of Christ to his church; and, 2*d*, The effectual exertions of his love for the object of it. And, if ever we have felt the value of Christ's promise, to the right understanding and due impression of divine truth on our hearts, on this subject, we will earnestly plead the fulfilment of it: Lord, may thy Holy Spirit take of the things pertaining to thee, and show them to us in their reality, nearness, and heart-affecting beauty!

I. Under the first head, the person who loves—Christ; the object of his affection—the Church; and the nature of his peculiar love for her, demand our attention in their order.

1*st*, The person who loves is Christ. We should always, in speaking of him, remember, with holy awe, that, in his divine nature, he is the Son of God, and one with the Father. Without this deep sense of his infinite glory and excellence, his doings and sufferings in our nature are not considered or treated with the respect due to their incalculable value. Christ, the Son of God, is mediator between God and man, and the surety of the sinners committed to him by the Father; and, consequently, he is the servant of the Father, in whom his soul delighteth; and, in the fulness of time, he took on himself a true body and a reasonable soul, prepared for him by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and was born of her, yet without sin:

thus, he is God and man " in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever." In the text he is called Christ, to remind us that he is appointed by the Father to his office, and anointed with the Spirit above measure as to his human nature, to enable him to fulfil the duties of the Redeemer, and accomplish the salvation of all those for whom he became surety, by pouring on them his gracious influences. This is the glorious, and wonderful, and gracious person who loves; and,

2d, The church is the highly favoured object of his love. The object of Christ's love is not the whole world, or every individual in the world, for multitudes never were of the church formed on earth; it is not the visible church, by whatever name called, for even in it " all men have not faith." It is the assembly of true believers throughout the world, and in all ages of the world; and hence, and because the most valuable part of it, they are in Scripture called the world, and the whole world, on whom alone the love of Christ is permanently fixed. Here we must remember that Christ first loved them, not as believers, but as sinners, scattered throughout the world, to be called into the church, through faith in him, according to the terms of the covenant of grace between the Father and himself. Hence, Christ is styled, " the head of his body, the church." As Adam was the head and representative of all his natural posterity in the first, so Christ is the head and representative of all

his spiritual posterity, even of all whom, of his own will, he shall beget by the word, of all who shall believe in his name in the second covenant; and, in a higher sense, he is the head of authority, and spiritual life and influence "to his body, the church." Though the members of the invisible church were united to Christ in the eternal purpose of God, this makes no actual change in their condition, till the time then fixed has arrived for putting forth divine power to separate them from the world lying in wickedness, and unite them to Christ, by faith of the operation of the Spirit, given on behalf of Christ; for before that time they remain under the curse of the first covenant, and the penalty of the broken law, being "children of wrath, even as others," and "the wrath of God abiding on them." Ah! what objects for the love of Christ were these! Conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity—without original righteousness, and corrupt in their whole nature—rebels against God, and captives of Satan—part of the punishment of their apostasy, cast out of their Father's house and inheritance, and under his wrath and curse—hateful, and hating one another—groaning under sin and misery, and without help or desire of deliverance! And yet, these sinful, miserable, and helpless creatures were the objects of Christ's love, —the highest, the holiest, and most fervent love! and,

3dly, What manner of love was this? Such a love as can exist in God alone; such a love as never

entered into the heart of man to conceive of; such a love as passeth all knowledge. It must be the same as the love of the Father for sinful men in extent in design and effect; for "the Son is one with the Father, in substance, power, and glory." It must have something peculiar to him as the second person of the Godhead, become surety for the salvation of those given by the Father, and yet according to the will of the Father. Pure love in a rational creature is a passionate desire of the happiness of its object, which is liable to change, and unable to secure that end of its desire. In the divine mind there can be no such thing as agitating affection, though we give it this name, because the effects of this mental act in God resemble those of human love. What the Holy Ghost calls love in Deity, out of condescension to our apprehension of spiritual things, is simply a will or purpose to promote the blessedness of those whom it respects; and of this end it cannot be disappointed, for God can have no will save what is worthy of himself, no will that originates from any thing out of himself; and, therefore, God can have no will, no love, liable to change; and no will, no love, that any creature, or any occurrence, can defeat or disappoint. "If God doth purpose, who can disannul? if he stretch forth his hand, who can turn it back?" If the infinitely wise, and holy, and almighty God, loves or wills the happiness of sinful creatures, what can prevent their enjoyment of it at his appointed time, and in his

appointed way, of bestowing the grace intended? These are some of the more general characters of Christ's love to his church; other matchless features of it will become manifest as we trace its wonderful expression and beneficent effects.

II. "Christ loved his church, and," as the first manifest effect of his love, "gave himself for it." The apostle, speaking of himself and of believers, gives the best explanation of this mysterious expression; "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." How many important truths do these words present to our minds! By faith we realize Christ, at once the priest and the sacrifice; and consequently appointed of God in both respects. God having ordained him, voluntarily consenting, to be the surety of his chosen in the new covenant, "laid upon him the iniquities of us all," saith Isaiah, not of us, all men, but of us all who shall be "healed by his stripes," being "many, who are the objects of the travail of his soul," and whom he shall justify by the saving knowledge of himself, even of us all who constitute his body, the church. "Christ gave himself," his soul and his body, in union with his divine nature, —"gave himself," bearing all her iniquities, laid on him, or imputed to him, by God,—"gave himself" for, *i. e.* instead of, her, under the curse of the law, —gave himself "for her," a willing subject to the

precept of the law, and a willing sacrifice under the penalty of the law,—and he thus gave himself for her "unto God," who, as Judge, held her the condemned prisoner of his justice,—and gave himself unto God for her, as the stipulated "ransom" for her complete deliverance from her state of sin and misery, and that she might enjoy the purchased inheritance of eternal life and bliss. Hence, by his blood, which stands for both his perfect obedience and his atoning death, offered to God "as a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour," Christ hath redeemed his church from the curse of the law, Gal. iii. 13; wrought for her an everlasting righteousness, 2 Cor. v. 21; and obtained for her the fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit, Gal. iii. 14; together with eternal redemption, Heb. ix. 12. Thus, Christ hath, by his blood, purchased a complete, an eternal salvation for his church. And can it be supposed that he hath purchased salvation for her, and has not purchased all the influences of the Spirit necessary to her enjoyment of this? It would be blasphemy against his love, against his wisdom, against the parties in the covenant of grace, to say that Christ secured the end, according to the will of the Father, but not the means of attaining it,—that he brought her in sight of the heavenly Canaan, but left her on the banks of Jordan, without the means of crossing the flood. Among these means faith is indispensable: without it, the love, the death, of the Son of God avail the sinner nothing:

without it, they would aggravate his guilt and his wretchedness. But it is secured in the purpose of God the Father, and, consequently, in the intention of Christ in giving himself for the church; for why did God make Christ to be sin for the church, but that the church might be the righteousness of God in him? And how can she be in him, in time, but by faith? And how could she have a right to the grace of faith, save by the sin-offering he made for her? You know it is only by virtue of his sacrifice that Christ acquires an actual right of property as mediator and surety of his church, or offers up prayers in her behalf. This sacrifice God considers as being offered from the foundation of the world, according to the terms of the everlasting covenant; in consequence of which, Christ tells us, that "he hath other sheep," which are his property, being given him of the Father, in consideration of his death, from eternity, but not yet of his fold on earth, and which he will bring in at the appointed time; and we know he has prayed for all who shall believe in his gospel to the end of the world, undoubtedly that the Father might teach and draw them to him by faith, in terms of the covenant. The apostle puts the soundness of this reasoning beyond a doubt, when he says to believers at Philippi, "to you it is given on behalf of Christ,"—on behalf of his sacrifice and his intercession, in virtue of it, "to believe in his name." Hath Christ purchased salvation, and the means of it, for his church,

and rested satisfied with that, and with laying claim to the character of a loving Redeemer, while the objects of his love perish for ever? It cannot be. It is inconsistent with the nature of divine love. Whom Christ loves, he loves unto the end; he loves in truth and in deed, and not in word only, and makes them partakers of all the blessings he hath purchased for them by his blood; for he gave himself for the church.

2d, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it, by the washing with water, by the word." Christ gave himself for the church, that he might possess the covenant right and qualification to apply the benefits of his purchase to her effectually, and to their fullest extent,—namely, that he might first cleanse it from guilt, and then sanctify or save from the pollution of sin. This is the obvious meaning of the sentence literally translated,—"that after having cleansed it, by the washing of water by the word, he might sanctify it." This cleansing is effected by the water of baptism, in which Ananias enjoined Paul to "wash away his sins." It is not to be forgotten, that Paul, and persons turning from heathen idolatry, or from the Jewish religion, to Christianity, were of mature years. Now, to all such, who, in receiving this ordinance, gave "the answer of a good conscience toward God,"—in other words, made a sincere profession of faith in and obedience to Christ, baptism was the outward sign of their being cleansed from their guilt, and the outward

seal of the pardon of all their sins, and of their being accepted of God as righteous, only for the righteousness of Christ reckoned to their account; or, what is the same thing, baptism was the seal of being justified by God. Let it not be imagined, however, that either the water, or the words of institution, or the intention of him who administered the ordinance, or any thing but Christ accompanying the act, according to his good pleasure, by the inward operation of his Spirit, rendered it effectual. In this sense, then, Christ cleansed his church by water; *i. e.* he sealed the justification of those by baptism, whom, in another sense, he had previously cleansed, as the apostle says, "by the word." By the word, Christ taught them, that "his blood cleanseth from all sin,"—by the word, he commanded them, saying, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,"—by the word, accompanied by his Spirit, he persuaded and enabled them to believe in him with the heart,—by the word, he applied to them his blood, which "purged their consciences from dead works to serve the living God;" and on professing this their faith to the church, he sealed their justification by the water of baptism. In these times of receiving adults into the church, not a few made a credible profession of faith which could not be refused by the church, though it was hypocritical, and were admitted to the privilege of baptism; but being unaccompanied by the Spirit of faith, it was to them no seal of being cleansed from guilt, or jus-

tified ; just as many children of professing Christian parents receive baptism, without receiving the thing signified, " the renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed abroad on them through Jesus Christ," as becomes manifest in their after-lives of unbelief and disobedience.

3d, Christ gave himself for his church, not only that he might cleanse or justify her, but that " he might also sanctify her." She is born in the image of the first Adam, which is earthy, unfit for as unworthy of glorifying and enjoying God. By his death Christ acquired the right and the power of accomplishing her salvation, and therefore of renewing her in the whole of her nature, after the image of God, exhibited in himself ; and this right he begins to exercise in " cleansing her with the washing of water by the word," *i. e.* in uniting her to himself, by faith wrought in her by the Holy Spirit through " the word," and so cleansing her from all guilt by his blood, and then sealing her justification by the water of baptism administered to adult believers. For the sake of distinct ideas, we are obliged to speak of justification and sanctification as blessings separate in the time of their existence ; when in reality they begin to exist at the same moment, and cannot exist but together, though differing in their nature, because they exist through the same principle. If believers are justified by faith, they also at the same time obtain an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith ; and if

Christ completes the justification of his church by one act, he also carries forward to its completion the work of sanctification, by the same means that the Spirit rendered effectual to justification, namely, the word and sacrament; and by them thus blessed in the diligent use of them, he enables her to die daily to sin, and to live unto righteousness; by them he enables her to purify herself from every filthiness of flesh and Spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fearof God.

4th, Christ loved the church, and gave himself for her, not only that he might reconcile her to God, and qualify her for the service and fellowship of God, but that he might accomplish in her the end of his love to her, namely, her glory and bliss in all eternity, "that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blame."

1*st*, Christ gave himself for the church, "that he might present her to himself;" or, as the apostle Jude expresses the same idea more expanded, "that he might present her faultless before the presence of his glory." The presence of Christ must be for ever glorious, but especially when the universe of men and angels shall be assembled before him as their judge. On that day shall he come in the glory of the Father—in the glory he had with the Father before the world began—in the glory of Emmanuel, who hath all power in heaven and in earth, because

he humbled himself unto the death of the cross—and in the glory of the shining and countless myriads of his attending angels. Then will he "present to himself," or bring into his near and favourable presence, his beloved church, that "he may be glorified in her," in his own glory in which she shall shine—that "he may be admired in her" for his wonderful love and mercy, grace and faithfulness, wisdom and power, manifested in one originally so mean, so defiled, and so deformed, 2 Cor. i. 10. Christ died to purchase this glory for the church, Col. i. 22; while on earth he prayed his Father that she might enjoy it, John xvii. 24; in her journey heavenward, he actually began to clothe her with it, 22; and when he shall appear in judgment, then "shall she also appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 4.

2d, Christ loved and gave himself for his church, that he might present it to himself in a state perfect and glorious,—"without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that she might be holy and without blemish, a glorious church." Whether these figures be borrowed from an acceptable sacrifice, or from the most holy and lovely of brides, it is needless to inquire; for they signify the same qualities and perfections in the church. But as the apostle is furnishing husbands with an incomparable model for their love to their wives; as Christ styles himself the bridegroom, and the church his bride; and as we are told, "she shall be ready for the mar-

riage-supper of the Lamb," I am inclined to think these figures are descriptive of the church in the character of a bride. At the marriage-supper of the Lamb his wife shall have made herself ready, and to her shall be granted that she shall be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints, Rev. xix. 7, 8; and the bridegroom will address her in the language of love and complacency in her perfections, saying, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." Well may the apostle say, that in giving himself in love for his church Christ determined, according to his covenant with the Father on her behalf, that he would make her "a glorious church." How can she be but a glorious church, when her outward person, how frail and deformed soever on earth, "shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body"—when "she shall be all glorious within" through the Spirit of Christ enlightening, and purifying, and gladdening her, in the gracious and powerful presence of him whom her soul loveth—when she shall be arrayed with all the glories of Christ's own righteousness, which is the righteousness of God, and reflect the splendours of Christ's own image, into which she shall be changed, from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord?

Thus I have endeavoured to illustrate the apostle's short but admirable account of the love of Christ to sinners. He who loves is the Son of God,

appointed "surety" of God's elect, considered as in a state of sin and misery, known on earth as the church, and characterized by faith in Messias, anointed Saviour, as either to come, or as already come in the flesh. Christ loved the church under sin and under the curse of the law, being under the wrath of God on her entrance into the world; and he gave himself in her stead a sacrifice appointed and accepted by the offended Judge of all the earth, for her redemption from this state of sin and wretchedness, and to purchase for her a right to all the means and grace necessary to prepare her for the eternal life to which she was chosen in him before the foundation of the world. "He loved her and gave himself for her." He gave himself for her in love, that he might furnish her with all the outward means and with all the inward grace he purchased for her,—in other words, that he might effectually apply to her the purchased complete and "eternal redemption." He loved her, and gave himself for her, that he might, by the word producing and by the sacrament strengthening faith, through the inward efficacy of his Spirit, unite her and seal her union to himself, and so invest her with her right to justification, and all his purchased benefits in their appointed order. He loved her and gave himself for her, that he might not only constitute her his mystical body, but that he might sanctify her by renewing her after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and

true holiness. He loved her, and gave himself for her, not only that he might make her one with himself, and conform her to his own image, but that he might perfect her in holiness at death, admit her immediately into paradise, raise her up in glory, openly acknowledge her as the object of his everlasting love at the last day, and grant her an abundant entrance into the eternal enjoyment of his incomparable bliss, and into the eternal fellowship of his own glory.

What do we learn from this view concerning the love of Christ to his church? Is it not an active determination in his mind to secure the complete happiness of its sinful and miserable objects? If you ask, what is its specific end? The apostle tells you, it is to present her to himself on the last day a glorious church. If you ask, what are the means his love has chosen as indispensable to this great end? Ye learn, they include first his death in the nature of man, and in the stead of the church, as necessary to her eternal redemption and the application of it. If ye ask, what are the means Christ has selected to make her a partaker of himself and his great salvation? It is faith in the efficacy of his death given in behalf of Christ, through the Spirit, rendering the word and sacraments effectual to that end. If ye ask, what are the means of making her meet for her destined inheritance? It is his spirit, sanctifying wholly soul, body, and spirit, and preserving blameless unto the day of the Lord.

Now, would this arrangement have been made had it not been indispensable to eternal life in the estimation of divine wisdom and love? Is it not a golden chain, which originates in Christ's love and ends in the eternal glory of the church—a chain, every link of which depends on another, and hath its proper place and office, to connect the one before with the one after, which ordained connexion constitutes its unfrangible strength and dazzling beauty? Who will presume to say, Christ could present the church in glory to himself, unless he had first sanctified her—that he could have sanctified unless he had first justified her—that he could have justified unless he had first given himself a sacrifice for her—or that he could have given himself for her, unless he had first loved her with an inconceivable love? Who, then, can limit the merits of Christ's death to the mere pardon of sin? Who can deny, that Christ's death is the procuring cause of salvation, and all the means of it, for the church for which he gave himself? Who can say the death of Christ sets aside the necessity of holiness of heart and life in them who trust in it for pardon, since it hath purchased for them the sanctification of soul, body, and spirit, which Christ hath engaged to bestow? Who can do any of these things, and not give the lie to the Holy Spirit, the author of this passage—and not blaspheme the wisdom and efficacy of the love of Christ—and not slander the design, and nature, and end of Christ's sacrifice

of a sweet smelling savour, which hath obtained "eternal redemption" for his church?

This, then, is divine love to sinners, that gives Christ to death as the adequate and accepted price of the complete salvation of each one of those in whose room and stead he suffered. Since this is divine love to perishing sinners, every thing else more indefinitely called divine love to apostate guilty men must be interpreted in conformity to this full and explicit statement. I have said this is divine love to perishing sinners, for it is the love of Christ to the church originally sinners; but is it not also the love of the Father and of the Spirit to them? In entertaining and acting on his love, did not the Son purpose with the Father, and, as mediator, undertake and proceed according to "the Father's will?" Entertaining and acting on his plan of love, was he not sent and upheld by the Father, and approved of, and commended to all who hear the gospel, as the object of their faith and obedience, because revealing his will for salvation? Say, then, is not the love of Christ the love of the Father and the Spirit, since the Father and he are one in essence? In what sense, then, is it said God loved the world, and Christ died for its sins? Have we not seen that divine love wills the happiness of its objects, and wills Christ's death as the procuring cause of that and all the means indispensable to the enjoyment of it? How, then, can the world be properly called the objects of God's love and of Christ's

death, seeing God leaves the greater part of the world in ignorance of both his love and Christ's death, and leaves the greater part of those who do hear the gospel to live and die in enmity to Christ and unbelief of his love in him? In what sense, I beseech you, can God be said to love or Christ to die for "the seed of the serpent," "between whom and the seed of the woman," Christ himself, God hath put "enmity," or for "those of old ordained to this condemnation," which include the whole race of Adam, not included in the church, the only object among them of God's love and Christ's death? It is then not true, and cannot be rightly said, that God loved and Christ died for the world, in the same sense as it is said that "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."

To this it is objected that we read in Scripture, "God loved the world," John iii. 16; "Christ gave himself a ransom for all," 1 Tim. ii. 6; "and tasted death for every man," Heb. ii. 9. An accurate knowledge of the divine scheme of salvation and of scripture language will do away this objection, founded on a few indefinite words, opposed by facts, and lengthened expositions of the divine mind, strangely forced into accordance with the sound but

not the sense of these words in their places. "The world" by no means signifies every man in the world, even when it is employed to signify its rational inhabitants. It signifies the wicked, John xv. 18; the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 12; and the Roman empire, Luke ii. 1. Most frequently it signifies "many," John xii. 19; both of Jews and Gentiles, xv. 18; vi. 33, 51. "All and every man" signify men of all sorts, Luke xviii. 12; Rom. xiv. 2; 1 Cor. 1, 5; Col. i. 28. This proves that these words are not always to be understood in a literal sense, but are to be limited by the nature of the subject with which they are connected. When God is said to love, and Christ to die for, "the whole world, and for every man," these terms must be limited by the clearly defined boundaries of God's love and Christ's death, distinctly limited to "the church," as we have seen; and then the plain and consistent meaning is, God loved and Christ died for "the world" constituting the church, many of the world of Jews and Gentiles, "all and every man" of the elect of God, of the many sons of God whom he bringeth into glory, of Christ's sheep whom he gave him, of those who believe in Christ. This is the world whom the Spirit convinceth of sin, John xvi. 8; whom Christ feeds with his flesh, vi. 33, 51; who fear God, and work righteousness in every nation, Acts x. 34, 35; and who shall in heaven thus celebrate effectual redeeming love, Rev. v. 9. And what would the friends of literal inter-

pretation gain by rejecting the scheme now proposed? They would believe in a love that leaves multitudes of its objects to perish eternally,—a love that wastes the precious blood of Christ on myriads who never hear of it, or hear of it only to aggravate their condemnation,—nay, a love that detracts from the glory of the almighty and all-wise God, from the infinite merit and efficacy of Christ's redeeming sacrifice. Adhering to literal interpretation, they must advance farther, far as they have gone,—they must in consistency believe and teach universal salvation, as many Socinians and others do; for is it not written, "Christ is the Saviour of the world," John iv. 42; and hath not Christ himself said, "and I, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me," John xii. 32. Whatever others may believe, let us believe with the apostle, "that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify having cleansed it with water, by the word, that he might present it to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blame."

1*st*, How great and marvellous the nature of Christ's love to the church! It is the love of the Creator to creatures of the dust; of the holy Lord God to unclean, rebellious subjects; of the Almighty, who had no need of their services, to those who are unprofitable servants at best; of the sovereign of the universe saving them and leaving mul-

titudes to perish; of God manifest in the flesh subjecting himself to the sinless infirmities of our nature, to the authority of his own law, to the hatred and persecution of men and devils, to the wrath and curse of God endured on the cross, in the room and stead of those sinners on whom he had set his love. In this love there is a splendour on which we cannot look; a mystery which we cannot penetrate. Angels desire to look into the manifestations of it. Saints have but a limited and obscure view of it, even after the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the riches of his glory, hath strengthened them with might in the inner man, to comprehend "the height and depth, the breadth and length of the love of Christ that passeth all knowledge." No wonder. It is the love of the infinite mind of God from all eternity; it includes the greatest and most marvellous work of God in time; and is to be the object of the study and the theme of the praise of holy angels and redeemed sinners in all eternity.

2d, Remark the inseparable connexion between Christ's gift of himself for the church, and the church's enjoyment of all the blessings of salvation, purchased by this invaluable price. Christ gave himself for the church, that through faith in his blood he might justify, sanctify, and glorify her. This was his purpose in dying for her; and is he not almighty and able to accomplish it? This is the will of the Father, and who can resist it? This

is a prime article in the new covenant, and God is not man that he should lie; and are not the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son, and the goodness of the Spirit, solemnly pledged to render it effectual? God must deny himself ere the complete salvation of those for whom Christ gave himself can be separated from his death, the accepted price of their eternal redemption.

3d, What is your duty, O ye who are habitually depending on and applying to Christ for salvation from sin and misery in the faith of these glorious truths? Should ye be, are ye not, giving to Christ the glory due to God manifest in the flesh? How glorious his majesty! how beauteous his grace! When Isaiah saw his glory, he thought himself undone, because he had seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. When he came into the world, not only the wise men of the East, but the angels of heaven worshipped him, a babe laid in a manger. His favoured followers on Mount Tabor beheld his face shining as the sun, with delight and astonishment; and the beloved disciple, contemplating his glory and his beauty, fell at his feet, as dead. Never, never, believers, can ye unite with those "who see no beauty in him, that they should desire him," much less with those "who despise and esteem him not." While you humble yourselves before God, because ye are so insensible to his beauty, and give him so little of your esteem, are ye not accustomed to exclaim with Thomas, ashamed of his unbelief,

" my Lord, and my God," and to convert the experience of the apostle into a prayer, " do thou who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of thy glory in the face of thy Son?" Are ye not habitually exclaiming, " what manner of love is this my Lord hath bestowed on me?" and habitually pressing forward to the honour and happiness he hath purchased for you, and undertaken to bestow on you, in the path of faith and holiness he hath marked out for you? Hath he called you to believe in his atoning death, and are ye not exercising faith in it for your justification? Hath he called you to be holy and harmless, and promised to sanctify you; and are ye not laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth more easily beset you? Hath he called you to glory, and promised to bring you unto it; and are ye not " keeping yourselves in the love of God, and looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life?" Are ye not admiring and studying to maintain the sacred union to himself, into which Christ hath taken you? Ye are united to him as the members of the body to the head; ye are one spirit with the Lord. Is not this the most inconceivable honour, the most intimate and indissoluble union? Should it not be wondrous in your eyes, be valued as most precious, and cherished and preserved with the most lively gratitude, and the most watchful care? Should ye not reverence his loving authority over you, and yield

him the most heartfelt obedience? By love passing knowledge, and by a price of infinite value, Christ hath acquired an absolute property in you, and tells you that he is the author of salvation to them only who obey him. And is not this authoritative love constraining you to live to him who died for you?

4th, How unspeakable your comfort in Christ's love, O believers, while your heart and ways habitually correspond with the holy designs of it towards you! These are the ways of wisdom, and in them alone is peace to be enjoyed; "this is our rejoicing, even the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world." Leave these, and the Lord will one day break your bones, and cause you to water your couch every night with tears, as he has treated his most eminent servants. It is only when you have respect to all your Lord's commandments that ye will enjoy unmixed comfort in his love. Then will ye rejoice in it, as originating in himself, and therefore unchangeable in itself, though changeable in its manifestations; as infinitely wise and powerful, and therefore able to accomplish its end in you, even your complete salvation. You will draw comfort from the infinite merit of Christ's death, as purchasing and securing the application, not of some, but of all the blessings contributing to and constituting your eternal happiness. Ye will rejoice in the preciousness of "the word, setting forth these blessings, and, under the secured influence of

the Spirit, enabling you to accept them, in accepting Christ; and it will be your meditation part of each day and of each night. And how desirable, how delightful will be to you the sacraments of the New Testament, especially of the Lord's Supper! It signifies to your senses, that they may assist your faith, Christ, his love, and all his benefits; it seals to you Christ, his love, his death, and all his benefits, your justification, your sanctification, and eternal glory; and will be to you the communion of the body and blood of Christ, to your spiritual nourishment and growth in grace."

SERMON XIII.

Psalm lxii. 8.—"Trust in him at all times, ye people."

Man, conscious of his weakness like many of the feebler plants, lays hold of some support to bear him up amid the storms of life. Alas, he is oftentimes as blind and unhappy in his choice as the undiscerning shrub! He often trusts to what cannot sustain him. He often trusts to what is consumed by his misplaced confidence. Both he and his stay are often seen leafless and decaying as they overhang the rocky precipice, and murmur in the blast of adversity that regards not their falling state. Wisdom from on high and an improved experience have taught many to place their confidence aright, to avoid this miserable end. Among the number of the heaven-directed was David. God was the rock of his salvation. On this immovable support he fixed himself, spread out his tender branches, and, sheltered from the driving storm, he enjoyed a perpetual and increasing verdure. Animated by that divine love which rendered himself secure and prosperous, peaceful and blest, he publishes his experience and not a theory, he earnestly exhorts

others to forsake the false and feeble props of indolence, ignorance, and vice, and to imitate his example so productive of permanent security—" Trust in the Lord at all times."

Let us consider the several parts of this exhortation: " Trust" here is the tranquil expectation of all things essential to happiness. " If we hope for that we see not," saith Paul, " then do we with patience wait for it." A man cannot be called happy without a competent portion of the good things of this life, unless his portion of spiritual good compensate for this want. A wise man seeks peace and holiness in the first place, and in the second place he seeks health and a moderate share of earthly enjoyment. The prophet David sees men in want of these blessings—sees them apt to mistake both the nature and means of happiness, and he adviseth them to " trust in God."

I. It is in vain to expect even temporal comfort and security from any creature. What is man in any situation that we should trust in him? Are not the multitude generally vain, giddy, and inconstant? Are not the great too often false, deceitful, treacherous? When laid in the balance to ascertain their title to our confidence, will not the light dust thereof outweigh them both? And are not the righteous of both these ranks, how affectionate soever, feeble, frail, and mortal? " Their breath is in their nostrils. They die, and in that day their thoughts

perish." What is gold, and all its earthly advantages, that we should make it our confidence? If it be acquired by fraud or oppression, will it not bring along with it remorse, the curses of the injured, and the vengeance of God? If it is the inheritance of our fathers, or the fruit of honest industry, doth it not multiply the cares of life and the occasions of sin, doth it not inflame unhallowed appetite and passion? Though wealth could ward off sorrow, and suffering, and death, which assuredly it cannot, what security have we that it will not "make to itself wings and fly away?" The elements are not under the control of the rich man. May not a spark of fire, a torrent of water, a gust of wind, or an earthquake, in a moment almost, level the most affluent with the poorest? And should we think of trusting in nothing sublunary, but expect all our temporal comforts from angels, would not this also be vanity? True it is, their power, their wisdom, and their benevolence far surpass those of other creatures; but are not all their faculties and affections devoted to God? Are they not his ministering servants, and can any thing be expected from them save what is agreeable to his will? Nay, would they not with horror reject that confidence offered to them which belongs to God their Lord? And would not this impious misplacing of it provoke God to employ even their ministry in punishing the daring idolaters? Created beings can contribute to our health

and moderate earthly enjoyment only in a limited degree; and that too entirely under the appointment and control of God. God, then, is the only proper object of confidence for temporal good. He is the first cause and last end of all things,—He is God over all—"in Him we live, and move, and have our being,"—He is the "Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Hence, the propriety of these repeated commands, "Trust not in oppression; put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help; and trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth all things richly to enjoy." And David enforceth these precepts by his own example,—"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but I will remember the name of the Lord our God."

II. From these observations I proceed to remark, that we ought to intrust all our concerns to God, our spiritual as well as our corporeal, our eternal as well as our temporal. We have seen that created beings are unequal to the care of our earthly concerns: how much more unequal must they be to that of our immortal interests! The influence of created beings either extends not to our souls, or it is very limited, and for the most part very hurtful to them. By nature and evil works we are removed far from God, the fountain of happiness—we are under a sentence of condemnation; and in creation

there is not a price of sufficient value to redeem a soul from death, nor a virtue of sufficient efficacy to turn us and bring us back to God. Our wills are averse from return, being "enmity to God;" our repentance stands in need of atonement, how much more our wilful sins; our worldly advantages often lead us farther from God, and subject us to heavier judgments; and our most affectionate friends are naturally involved in the same wretched and helpless circumstances. None but God, our offended sovereign, can forgive us; none but the Father of our spirits, and the Disposer of all events, can communicate efficient spiritual aids to us. We must trust in God, therefore, for things temporal and spiritual necessary to our happiness; and his nature and word define those things we may expect from him They must be things agreeable to his perfections, for he will not dishonour himself by his gifts; they must be things he hath promised, and be expected in the way of his appointment—for he is the best judge of good, and the method of obtaining it, and his wisdom and sovereignty are not to be insulted by our folly and arrogance. Do we expect good from God, and neglect the duty of prayer? we presume to treat him as if he were in jest when he said, "Ye have not because ye ask not." Are the things we incline to commit to him, whether ends or means, evil in themselves, or improper and unprofitable for us? Can God grant in kindness to us what his word and our own consciences condemn?

Have they the appearance of good, such as worldly and convenient good things, or speedy spiritual consolations? we may ask them; but, as we are not certain that the grant of these things is more conducive to God's glory and our good than the refusal of them, we must ask them in submission to his unerring wisdom and sovereign pleasure. "Give us this day our daily bread,"—"If thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless not my will but thine be done!" Did men regulate their expectations from God by his own revealed will, their prayers would not remain so often unanswered; and though they should complain of supplications so often presented without success, God would no longer thus severely reproach them, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss."

III. Here an inquiry of great importance presents itself,—What foundation have we for this trust in God, for all "things pertaining to life and godliness?" Sinful creatures can have no natural right to entertain it any more than rebellious subjects have a right to expect grace at the hands of their insulted earthly prince, who hath taken them prisoners in arms and fighting against him; and therefore, granting that God is all-sufficient to the happiness of his creatures, as his presiding over all things and their entire dependence on him evidently imply, still it ought to be asked, "what authority or ground have I for expecting all temporal and

piritual blessings from him whom I have so grievously offended?" We have the perfections of God, which qualify him for this confidence; we have the promise of God to hear all who ask in the name of Christ; and these form the foundation of our trust in him. No one who thinks seriously can doubt his wisdom. He who made all things will assuredly superintend them; for it is as worthy of him to preserve and govern them, as to have created them at first; and these imply infinite, unerring wisdom. Without doubt, he who made and presides over all things must know what is best for us, in all respects and in every situation. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.—All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.—O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all.' His works no less clearly demonstrate his power. His eye penetrates the most hidden recesses, and his power can execute the orders of that wisdom which it every where accompanies. Great is our Lord, and of great power, his understanding is infinite. What God is there in heaven, or in earth, that can do according to thy works? Thou spakest and it was done, thou commandedst and it stood fast,—even the glorious fabric of the world. With God nothing shall be impossible. I form light and I create darkness, I make peace, and I create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things. The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul? and his hand is

stretched out, and who shall turn it back? He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? It is no less evident that God is good. If we survey the whole of God's works, and penetrate below the surface of seeming evil, are we not obliged to say, "his tender mercies are over all his works." Every period is an instructor in the goodness of God, every sense a channel through which it flows in upon us; the heart is filled with admiration of its own experience of the continual, rich, and varied goodness of the Lord, and excited to exclaim, "Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night teacheth knowledge concerning thee,—taste and see that the Lord is gracious,—thou art good, O Lord, and that my soul knoweth right well." And when we reflect that all the happiness enjoyed by myriads of beings in time and in eternity flows from the disinterested benignity of God over all, and blessed for ever, must we not say with our Lord, "there is none good but one, that is God." And this good God is immortal, an everlasting source of felicity to those who trust in him. He who was before all things must be without beginning of days, and he who has no beginning can have no end; he must live for ever by the same necessity by which he hath existed from eternal ages. This is one of the properties of God which the apostle teacheth is so fully established by the material world, that it may

be seen in it, and that even the heathens are inexcusable for not discerning it; the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen by things which are made even his eternal power and Godhead. This is the perfection of the Most High, which forms at once the ground of the Psalmist's consolation when deeply afflicted by the frail and perishing nature of himself and the world he inhabits, and the theme of his song of praise to God on that occasion; "of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hand. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and of thy years there is no end." Who, then, will not join the apostle in ascribing glory to God for his immortality, and saying, "Now, unto the king eternal, immortal, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

But, though these perfections incontrovertibly establish that God is the only proper object of our confidence, do they not rather forbid than encourage sinful men to trust in him? If God be good, hath not man abused his goodness, and turned his grace into wantonness? If God be a wise ruler, concerned for the honour of his government, which alone can render it the permanent source of happiness to reasonable creatures, will he not see this abuse, and must he not discourage and punish this

infectious ingratitude and wickedness? If his power be almighty and eternal, have we not reason to dread, that, when the period of discipline misimproved is at an end, this power will be for ever employed in vindicating his majesty, and justice, and wisdom, by inflicting signal but righteous judgments on such signal transgressors? But, is it not probable God hath, in his purpose and execution of it, reconciled justice and mercy,—hath asserted the inviolable majesty of his government, by appointing some suitable substitute,—some adequate atonement for the sins of all who shall suitably improve this ordinance of grace? After all, how shall we place our trust in him who is justly angry with us, and whose honour renders necessary a propitiation, which we know not where, or in what manner, to procure or present? Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

These are questions every mind deeply awakened to a sense of sin and danger has in all ages and under all dispensations anxiously put; these are questions human reason could never have satisfactorily answered; here are difficulties we neither could have removed nor surmounted. But, hath God proposed an atonement for sin, whereon he may rest the vindication of his own glory in par-

doning sinners, and I may rest my expectation of pardon, of grace, and of eternal life? and how shall I obtain an interest in this atonement, and effectually improve it for all the ends of its appointment? To all who put these questions in good earnest, we have "glad tidings of great joy." We have broken and dishonoured the law of God, but the Son of God in our nature, and as our surety, magnified the law by a perfect obedience; we deserved to perish under the wrath of God, but Christ endured our curse in his own body on the accursed tree; and thus, by the appointment of God, he accomplished a righteousness sufficient to take away the guilt of transgressors, and to secure their acceptance with God. What else can be the meaning of these words, "he hath made him to be sin," or rather a sin-offering, "for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him?" If this atonement is of such wonderful virtue as to assert the righteousness of God when he receives his once rebellious subjects into his favour, what shall I do that I may enjoy the benefits of its efficacy? He who "is a jealous God," who is the best judge of what is honourable to himself, hesitates not to declare him righteous, though formerly the chief of sinners, who is united with Christ by faith,—a faith that constitutes him one body and one spirit with his righteous mediator. Is not this the interpretation which a plain and unprejudiced understanding will give to these assertions of the apostle; Jesus Christ hath God set

forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past; to declare, I say, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus? Is not this a foundation on which the faithful in Christ Jesus may rest their confidence towards God? How undeniable the benevolence of God to perishing sinners; seeing he hath "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What now can obstruct the mercy of God to those who believe in Christ; seeing he hath made reconciliation for them? Will the gracious God withhold from them any suitable blessing, seeing he hath not withheld from them his only begotten,—his well-beloved Son, the most precious of all gifts? Nay, will not the just God now confer on them all the blessings of salvation; seeing he hath received the precious and appointed price of them,—seeing he who cannot lie hath promised to bestow them,—seeing the communication of them is continually solicited by him who paid the stipulated ransom, and whom the Father heareth always? Surely, all who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ with the heart, may reason conclusively in this manner, "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? How are those who have faith in Christ to improve his atonement, that they may expect necessary bless-

ings from God? They must in frequent prayer hold it up to their righteous judge, as the grand and prevalent plea, in arrest of merited judgment, and for the mercies essential to their happiness. In this way the apostle encourages himself and all true Christians to cherish and express entire confidence in God, "we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The father of the faithful and all his spiritual offspring before the coming of Christ believed in Messiah promised, as do all his spiritual descendants since that period in Messiah already come; both professing this ground of confidence towards God, have poured out their heart before him; and which of them all hath thus trusted in him in vain? The testimony of the apostles, founded on their experience, may be quoted as the substance of the evidence of all the faithful on this subject; "we had the sentences of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead; who delivered us, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us."

IV. The prophet David exhorts, with propriety, to trust in God "at all times," in the morning as well as in the evening of life, in the meridian of prosperity, as well as in the midnight of adversity.

At what age have we no need of the divine aid and protection? Could we join the vigour of youth with the experience of old age, would not the guidance and support of the almighty ruler and judge of the universe be awanting? How much more necessary must they be when the strength of youth is enslaved by passion, and the wisdom of age borne down by accumulating infirmities! In what situation can the man, the Christian be placed, in which he hath no need of trust in God, or in which he ought not to exercise it? Is there exaltation so solidly great as not to require the hand of God to give it stability? Is there depression so low as to escape his notice, as to make no impression on the tender heart of our gracious advocate, or to exceed the efforts of divine wisdom and power for deliverance from it? What more exalted than the throne of Nebuchadnezzar; and yet was he not hurled from this lofty pre-eminence over men to the lowly level of the beasts of the field, by the hand of the Almighty which he had set at nought? What more established than the throne of David, till he became self-confident and disobedient; and did not God then shake it to its very foundation? Who more distinguished than Peter for faith and zeal, for love and boldness in his master's cause; and yet when he provoked God by his self-sufficiency to withhold his actual grace, did he not meanly and repeatedly deny the knowledge of his Lord, with oaths and imprecations? In what situation can

man be placed in which trust in God is not necessary, and would not be beneficial; I now add, in what situation can the Christian be placed in which he is not encouraged to look to God with sweet expectation of what is truly good,—of what is absolutely best for him? The faith of his people is, "the Lord is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly;" and does not their experience, in the most trying circumstances, equal and often exceed their expectation? Who has been more afflicted than Job; and did not the intimate acquaintance with God, which he acquired in the course of his troubles, surpass his former knowledge of him, clear and extensive as this was, as far as seeing doth hearing; nay, was he not caused "to rejoice as the days of his sorrow had been," because, in this case it was most honourable to God and beneficial to him? What more severe than the buffetings of Satan? Under this persecution did not Paul receive this comfortable assurance, "my grace is sufficient for thee, my strength shall be made perfect in your weakness;" and, under the influence of this promise, did not the apostle say, "most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities; that the power of Christ may rest upon me?" What more awful than the valley and shadow of death? but, the Spirit of inspiration hath said, "precious in the sight of the Lord is his saints' death;" and is not their testimony, "though I walk through the val-

ley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy staff and thy rod comfort me?" Beware of suspecting that this happy experience is limited to any age of the church, that, whatever it once was, it is now far otherwise. Alas! that the witnesses of it are less numerous, less decided! but this is not because trust in God is not a duty, or a duty without promise. While the world lasts, man will be dependent, and God able and willing to fulfil the unchangeable promises of his grace to those who confide in him; "his mercy endureth for ever," his faithfulness to all generations; "he is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." "Trust in him, therefore, at all times,"—in the morning as well as the evening of life, in the day of prosperity as well as the night of adversity, in the last as well as in the first ages of the church.

V. We are not to imagine that trusting in God alone excludes the use of lawful means. We may use the faculties he hath bestowed on us agreeably to his directions, for the attainment of temporal or spiritual good, suited to our character and circumstances; in the same way we may employ the good offices of our fellow-men; especially for the accomplishment of our salvation we may employ all these, in the due improvement of the word, sacrament, and prayer. Reason draws this inference concerning our Christian liberty from the subordination

of these instruments to beneficial ends,—from their being placed within our reach,—and from their being the gift of God. To neglect them, to sit still and be idle under the pretext of trusting in God, would be to reduce ourselves to the level of things inanimate, would be to reject the counsel of God against ourselves, and to offer an affront to him, the giver of all good. Into this crime we seldom fall in pursuit of worldly goods; then we seldom omit any probable means of success; and why should we be less reasonable, less active, or obedient to God, as Christians in pursuit of spiritual blessings, than as merchants, or mariners, or husbandmen in search of temporal gain? This plain inference of reason is confirmed by the express precepts of the Scripture. While we are there commanded to trust in God alone, we are also commanded "to do good,—to commit our ways to God,—to commit our souls to him in well-doing,—and to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." These expressions enjoin well-doing along with trust in God; which implies, that a prudent, and diligent, and persevering use of lawful means is our indispensable duty, and that the use of means sinful in themselves or in the manner of employing them, is utterly inconsistent with trust in God. He who employs no means and expecteth his favours disobeyeth God; he who employs unlawful means both disobeys and distrusts him. When we have

" committed our ways," that is, our honest and best endeavours, " to God," then we are patiently to wait for the issue which the Almighty in wisdom and mercy sees to be best. Fretfulness or apprehension, vexation and impatience, are irreconcilable with the nature of trust in God. A faithful friend of like passions with ourselves would have reason to be offended with such evidences of want of confidence in him; how much more reason will the most perfect of beings, and the friend that sticketh closer than a brother, " have to be offended with such injurious suspicions?" He who knows him best, and whose heart corresponds to his excellencies, will entertain no affections so dishonourable to God; " the righteous is not troubled; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." " Fret not yourselves,—let patience have its perfect work,—trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed,—he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." It may please God, that trust in him, accompanied by a diligent use of means, shall be ineffectual for a time, shall not prevent or at once put an end to troubles of a temporal or spiritual kind; but perseverance in this course leads to a glorious deliverance, and qualifies to adopt the hymn of David, " I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song

in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

VI. To whom doth the prophet David address his exhortation when he saith, "Trust in him at all times, ye people?" God alone is the suitable and inexhaustible source of human happiness, and therefore ought to be the confidence of all the ends of the earth: but it is no less clear, that the exercise of his goodness towards mankind must be regulated by his wisdom and holiness. His providence preserveth and bountifully supplies the wants of the unjust and unthankful,—yet he is angry with their wickedness every day. While they remain in this state, as we have already seen, infinite power, or wisdom, or even goodness itself, which aggravates the guilt of their ingratitude, cannot reasonably be the object of their confidence; they must be objects of terror to them. Whatever their professions are, their conduct proves they do not believe God to be what in reality he is; hence, it is impossible they can rationally trust in him whom they neither esteem, love, nor obey, though their sovereign; it is impossible they can truly trust in him who distinctly and repeatedly declares that their offerings are an abomination, and their persons liable to his dreadful judgments. It follows, that if the prophet David intend this exhortation for all men, he exhorts the ungodly to the end in order to the means—he exhorts them to trust in God that they may strive to

put themselves into the condition of expecting all good from him, just as the apostle exhorts to " be filled with the Spirit," that we may employ those means with the diligent use of which God hath connected the reception of this " unspeakable gift." The import of the exhortation in the text in this view is, " Let sinners acquaint themselves with God; let them renounce all confidence in created good; let them come to him by faith in Jesus Christ which purifieth the heart and life, as well as justifieth the person before God, and then place unlimited confidence in God for all things pertaining to this life—truly good for them—and to the life to come." Without these, acts of filial dependence on God are not required, are presumptuous, are acts of solemn derision, which God will not pass with impunity. Unto the wicked God saith, " what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or to take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction, and casteth my word behind thy back?" This call, in its proper acceptation, is addressed to those whom God styles, in the full import of the title, " my people;" but how shall we distinguish the people of God from those who rest in the name given them on account of their place in the visible church?

Let us attend to the description he gives of their mind and conduct, influenced by his discriminating operations in them. They habitually regard God as the object of the profoundest reverence and love;

they delight in his good and holy law, extending to the heart as well as the life, while they tremble at the sentence of condemnation it pronounceth on them; they lay their hand as it were on Jesus, their sacrifice for sin, and importunately plead his merits and intercession in arrest of judgment, and for pardon, and for grace, and for every blessing here, with eternal life hereafter; they are constrained by the love of God in Christ to live devoted to his service, in all manner of holy obedience and meek submission; they are continually deploring sin that dwelleth in them, and stirring themselves up to seek a more lively resemblance of God in holiness, that they may more nearly resemble him in happiness; and whilethey distrust themselves more and more, they learn to recline on the arm of omnipotence and love with growing confidence. Their trust in God is not a superficial notion, the offspring of carelessness and insensibility; it is a distinct and devout act of an enlightened understanding and an affectionate heart; it is not one act only, it is rather a habit of mind constantly inclining to rest in God all-sufficient. Under particular trials and at stated times, the pious man seeks to testify his trust in God to others, or to strengthen both the grace itself and the comfort of it by solemn expressions of prayer and praise. These expressions naturally and necessarily flow from habitual reliance on God, and experience of the comfort of it; they are the indispensable duty of the righteous; they

have been and ever shall be their delight. With them the song of David is ever new, "My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times, ye people."

Let me ask you, have ye a right to trust in God as your friend? All mankind are by nature enemies to God in their heart and by wicked works; and God cannot be the confidence of his enemies. Have ye evidence that you are reconciled to him through faith in Christ which sanctifieth the whole man? for, if ye have not the Son, ye have not the Father—nay, "his wrath abideth on you." If you imagine you are in a state of reconciliation with God, because ye imagine ye have faith in the mercy of God, through the merits of Christ, while ye live in any known sin, ye cruelly and absurdly deceive yourselves. The Scriptures, not the notions of men, or your suppositions, are the only rule of your faith and manners; ye must show the foundation of your confidence in the Scriptures, or ye must renounce it as unsafe, as ruinous; ye must show by the Scriptures that faith in Christ doth not work by love, doth not purify the heart, or keep the commandments of God,—ye must show by the Scriptures that he who worketh sin is the friend of the God of holiness who forbids it,—ye must do all this, or ye must lay your account

with vengeance instead of the divine favour ye now expect. And if ye will not do this, if ye will obstinately measure God's attributes by your folly, and not by his own revealed will, ye must in consistency, if you would not renounce all pretensions to reason, throw away the Bible as utterly superfluous and unworthy of God. But, who among you is prepared to do this, is not startled at the idea of forfeiting the sure benefits of revelation for the dreams of the human imagination, is not desirous of escaping from sin and wrath by Jesus Christ, and obtaining solid and lasting peace in God, the confidence of those who thus repose in him? Alas, ye have heard of the terrors of the law and the grace of the gospel in vain, ye are asleep, ye are dead in trespasses and sins, if these are not your desires, your prayers, your unwearied endeavours! "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Christians, let me entreat you to examine the nature of your trust in God. Ye have a right to confide in God; ye are exercising this grace in a more or less perfect manner, and it is of importance for you to ascertain the purity or impurity, the strength or the weakness, of your trust in God. Without this ye cannot be duly grateful to God for a holy and firm reliance on him; without this ye cannot be duly humbled for a mixed, a weak, and wavering hope in him—ye cannot be excited to the efforts necessary to the purifying and strengthening

of this divine principle. Is your trust in God a rational act, founded on God's testimony carefully searched; does it lead to the diligent use of the means appointed for the attainment of temporal or spiritual good; does it habitually exert an influence in composing and sweetening the temper; and is it frequently venting itself in devout prayers and praise? We have seen that this is the character of that trust in God, which is produced by his word and Spirit; and it must be the character more or less evident of your trust: but are you aware of the many imperfections and sins which pollute and shake it? Do you remark with grief how prone you are to mingle trust in means with trust in God, to become conceited and presumptuously to entertain high and unwarranted expectations; at another time to be discontented, and fretful, and anxious to be lifted up with wealth, and to neglect humble prayer and fervent praise? The night of sharp and long-continued afflictions will make you sensible of the existence and extent of these evils in your heart, the suspicion of which in the day of prosperity would have startled you. What careful and constant watching over your hearts will be necessary to detect the lurking treason; what resolution, and exertion, and prayers, will be necessary to prevent it from gaining ground and betraying you into idolatry to produce and maintain a simple reliance on God in all circumstances! In proportion as the Spirit of God enables you to approach

him, and contemplate his glorious excellencies in the face of Jesus Christ, will you discover the defects and sins of your manner of trusting in God, will you aspire after and attain to "the holy confidence of children to a father, able and ready to help you."

SERMON XIV.

Psalm cxix. 63.—" I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts."

THESE are the words of David; they describe his conduct towards the people of God, which himself approved of, and hath recorded for the direction of religious men in all ages. That we may be followers of " the man according to God's own heart" in this important point, let us consider first what is implied in the example here set before us; and, second, some of the motives to imitate it.

I. The example of David implies, that he esteemed and loved those who feared God and kept his precepts. A wise and good man does not choose for his companions those whom he cannot love; and he cannot love those whom he does not esteem. The persons described in the text were objects of esteem and love to David; as persons of their character will be to all in the Christian church who resemble David. What can be more estimable than their ruling principle—the fear of God? The truly wise, those who choose the best ends which a rational and immortal creature can choose, and the

fittest means of these ends, must command our esteem, if we are capable of estimating sound practical knowledge. Does not the fear of God terminate on the best end, God, whose favour is life eternal, and whose displeasure is everlasting death; and is it not the best means of avoiding the one and gaining the other, seeing "the fear of the Lord is to depart from all evil,"—is to become what God willeth his friends to become? This is a solid foundation on which all that is good and amiable in character and conduct may be built, and the excellence of it is manifested by the inseparable connexion betwixt it and the conscientious observance of the commandments of God: they who truly fear God, as truly "keep his precepts." This demonstrates the perfection of their wisdom; first in the choice of a suitable principle of life, and then in continuing to apply it vigorously in the right direction,—to promote the glory of God in the holiness and happiness of themselves and others. Well may the Psalmist say of them, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments." And it deserves to be remarked, that the fear which produceth spiritual obedience to God must be amiable as well as wise; it must be a fear corresponding to the love as well as the awful greatness of God; it is the fear of children to their Father in heaven; and it must include in it goodwill, together with active beneficence, to the objects of his benevolence. If they are called

" fools who despise wisdom and instruction," what can they be called who do not esteem and love the pre-eminently wise, namely, the pious and benevolent? It is not folly to admire or seek the acquaintance of those who eminently improve the arts that contribute to render this life more comfortable or agreeable; but it is folly of an injurious kind to court the acquaintance of them and to shun or neglect or despise the society of those who " fear God and keep his precepts," whose wisdom is conversant in eternal objects, and conducive to eternal happiness. Indeed, to undervalue their wisdom, is to undervalue " the wisdom which cometh from above;" for it is God who putteth this fear in their hearts: to undervalue those who are animated by it, is to undervalue those whom God hath admitted into the covenant of friendship with himself, with whom he dwells, and in whom he walketh. Because, " they are more excellent than their neighbours," and because they derive their excellency from God, who delights to honour, and bless, and walk with them, David, and every one of David's spirit, saith, " I am a companion of all them that fear God, and keep his precepts."

II. The example of David shows that he associated with them in their spiritual exercises. Men of David's spirit will associate with those who fear God in the exercise of their devotional feelings and affections. Those who fear God " think much on

his name," and consequently "they speak often together;" and he who is their companion mingles in their edifying conversation:" the secret of the Lord is with them, and he taketh sweet counsel with them, that, when the Lord showeth them his covenant, he may enjoy the precious discoveries. Though holy reverence of God is the habit of their minds, sometimes it is more feeble, or less active than it ought to be: he goes to share with them in their mourning over their proud insensibility of heart, or to awaken them to a just perception of their deadness; and he calls on them to exercise, by the most encouraging consideration, their great principle of action, their secretly awful religious affections, "O, fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him." Those who fear God are the objects of God's special regard, in whose favour he hath uttered and recorded many gracious promises; and the lively exercise of this fear is to those who perceive it in themselves, a sure and pleasing pledge of their interest in these promises,—of their receiving, in due season, every thing truly good for them. He associates with those who fear the Lord, not merely to enter into their feelings, and to exhort them to their duty, when fearing, or actually sinking into security; he goes to lay with them their case before God, and implore those influences of his Holy Spirit, which alone can mould the untoward heart into a suitable frame, and animate with holy powerful affections. In the becoming

posture of supplication, he fervently prays, " O, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence, and holy fear." And, has it not happened on many such occasions, that the " place was," as it were, " shaken, and great fear," of a truly filial kind, " came upon them all ?" Sometimes the fear of God, whether from an overwhelming sense of sin, or from the power of temptation, or from great tenderness of heart, or from afflictions singular in their severity or continuance, tends towards slavishness, and the tremblings of unbelief: on such an occasion he will not withhold his spiritual skill, or the result of his own greater experience. He will remind them of the Lord's dealings with others in circumstances like their own; and though he may surprise them, he will not fail to suggest that the very depths of distress is a fit situation, and loudly calls for a spirited attempt to honour God with a song of admiring gratitude. " Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him, but, when he cried unto him, he heard him." Their surprise will subside into belief and thankful wonder when they are brought to perceive the consistency, the union, and mutual dependence of fearing and glorifying God in deeply afflicting circumstances. When he can add to the examples which his knowledge draws from the history of God's spe-

cial providence, and to the argument derived from his own faith in God's faithfulness, the weight of his own experience, he will, with all humility, make it known to them,—he will make it known with a view to the glory of God, and their good, together with the exercise of his own gratitude, and the confirmation of his own holy confidence in the Lord. He will say to them, "come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. But, verily, God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." Having done this, he waits for that success which the Spirit of God taught him to expect from the illustration of the grace and power of God in his own experience; "the humble shall see this, and be glad; and your heart shall live that seek the Lord." When he says unto God, "I will worship in thy fear towards thy holy temple," he describes the habit of his mind, and his manner of performing public worship. This tribute to God he pays the more cheerfully that it is rendered in the society of those who delight in the same spiritual service, and perform it in the same reverential temper. In glorifying God with them in the sanctuary, he aims at their and his own improvement, and also at inducing the ignorant, the careless, the formal, to worship

with them in spirit and in truth, with holy fear: hence, he addresseth God in these terms, "my praise shall be of thee in the great congregation.—I will pay my vows before them that fear thee. They shall praise the Lord that seek him.—The meek shall eat and be satisfied.—All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."

He associates with those who fear God, not only in expressing and exercising this filial veneration in worship, but in the active service of a holy life. This is the proper fruit of this religious affection cherished by these religious exercises, in the production of which those who fear God stand greatly in need of mutual countenance and co-operation; and this the Psalmist and the man of his spirit willingly give. They consult together about the most effectual means of promoting the honour of their Judge and Father in the advancement of the faith, and holiness, and happiness of themselves and of their fellow-men; and they encourage each other to persevere in their common or respective works of righteousness. Guarding against the temptation to strife and envy even in the service of God, they cherish a holy emulation in each other by their exemplary zeal and activity,—"They provoke one another to love and to good works." When the influence of sloth, or of worldly mindedness, cools fervour or relaxeth diligence, "they exhort one another daily, lest they should be hardened by sin."

When temptation prevaileth against one who feareth God, and he continues under its influence, or repeatedly yields to it, a man of David's spirit, with all the caution of wisdom, with all the tenderness of love, ventures on the language of reproof. His aversion to the office is overcome, his troubled spirit composed, his timidity converted into holy courage, by the command of God, so persuasively worded: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." It may be, his own experience of singular mercy in a time of backsliding has rendered him no less wise than willing "to teach transgressors of this kind the law of God"—"to restore a man overtaken in a fault," and penitent for it, "in the spirit of meekness"—and "to strengthen his brethren when restored." In this manner he seeks the society of those who serve the Lord, and he strengthens their hand and encourages their heart for every good work.

III. These words imply that David and the man of his spirit associate with those who fear God and keep his commandments, to "rejoice with them when they rejoice, and to weep with them when they weep." There is a foundation for this laid in the new nature and principles of the people of God; when they are "made partakers of the divine nature," the power of malevolence is broken in their hearts, and the good-will of their heavenly Father,

whose spirit they breathe, whose image they bear, is implanted and cherished in its place. They are all members of that body of which Christ is the head: "and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." Hence the man of David's spirit seeks the company of those who fear God, that he may rejoice with them rejoicing. Godly men must acknowledge with Paul and the early converts, "we wax," in our unconverted state, "foolish, living in malice and envy;" and even after they have made no inconsiderable progress in the Christian life, their experience obligeth them to subscribe to the testimony of God in the Scriptures, "the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth unto envy." Against this "work of the flesh,"—this malignant affection,—this rottenness of the bones, "which slayeth the silly one," he wages a continual war, with various success in single conflicts, but with decided advantage on the whole. He studies to guard against the desire of vain glory, to be clothed with humility, and to walk honestly, not in strife or envying. The sight of the worldly prosperity of others calls him to bless God for them; excites gladness of heart, and draws him to their cheerful dwellings, that he may take part in their gratification, and add to their gladness of heart by his kind participation of it. The world will suppress her envy, and feed her mirth with their prosperity; but it is because "the Lord hath showed great mercy upon

them that he rejoiceth with them;" and thus he contributeth to sanctify the pleasure accompanying temporal good things. One would be inclined to think, that however envy may be excited by the abundance of the things of this life possessed by others, the spiritual prosperity of the favourites of heaven could not provoke this vile affection in the breast of those who fear God; and yet the apostle says unto those whom he styles "babes in Christ," "there is among you envying," and that on account of religious matters and apprehended superiority in their neighbours. To this wretched emotion, as it riseth, the man of whom we are speaking opposeth the glory of the sovereign Dispenser, and the honour and happiness of those who are the objects of his distinguishing liberality, and the exceeding and unmerited favour of God to himself. When these have obtained their due influence in his bosom, he resolves to take the nearest view of the munificence of their common Father to his brethren beloved; he resolves to testify to them the happiness he derives from their happiness, and to strive to render it permanent. He goes and joins them in the spirit of Barnabas visiting the infant and flourishing church of Antioch, "who was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith; and who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

The man of David's spirit joins himself to those

who fear God, that he may weep with them when they weep. How beautifully is this part of the Christian temper illustrated and converted into an incumbent duty in the epistle to the Hebrews? "Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them; and them that suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." The object of sympathy is either temporal or spiritual affliction; in both the "companion of those who fear God" interests himself, with tenderness and without pride. Nehemiah is a lively picture of all of this character, even when they hear of the sorrows and hardships of God's people, how distant soever from the scene of suffering. They of whom he asked concerning the Jews left in Judea, when the rest were carried to Babylon, told him that they were in great affliction and reproach. "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven." As soon as an opportunity of visiting the afflicted offers, this man hastens to visit him, that "he may mourn with him, and comfort him; and when he lifteth up his eyes and knoweth him not, because of the wretchedness of his appearance, he lifteth up his voice and weepeth." The man who feareth God, and is almost overwhelmed with his afflictions, pathetically implores the commiseration of his friends, for both his temporal and spiritual sufferings, but especially for the last; "have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for

the hand of God hath touched me." And he can appeal to all who know his manner of behaviour to the afflicted, whether it has not been marked by the tenderness of sincere sympathy; "did I not weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor?"

They fulfil not the law of Christ who bear the burden of his people's sorrows, but will not put their finger to the burden of their wants. But this man administers to their wants, "as God hath prospered him," without arrogance or ostentation. With the apostle he frequently stirs himself up to relieve the necessities of those who fear God,—saying, "as we have opportunity let us do good to all men, but especially to the household of faith." His gratitude to God, who stands in no need of any of his services, fixeth on the indigent and amiable offspring of his heavenly Father as the proper objects of its beneficence,—and he lays before God his purpose, with the reasons of it: "O, my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." As free from arrogance as from ostentation, he conforms to the purifying precept of the Lord: "let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth." And when he has nothing to give but his sympathy, his counsels, his prayers, he humbly and frankly says, "silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee."

IV. When David, and the man of David's spirit, saith, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts," they intimate that they adhere to them in good and in undeserved evil report, and in good and in evil condition. "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity;" and is not he who is born of God a friend and a brother to all who trace their spiritual existence to the same heavenly Father? Were those, who have the character of fearing God, to forfeit this character "by spots which are not of the children of God," he could not be a companion to them; while his soul would weep for them in secret, "and he would not cease to pray for them so long as he is not convinced that they have not sinned unto death." Were those who fear God to move in a station widely removed in its mental habits, in its pursuits, in its manners and condition, from his own, he could not be supposed to associate with them as equals, as his familiar acquaintances, in any other respect than as subjects of the kingdom of grace, the laws of which command those of the highest rank to "condescend to men of low degree." Though those who fear God avoid all gross offences, and allow themselves in no known sin, they are not free from infirmity, they are not clean from all sin; and they sometimes are the objects of malevolent reports, which are either without foundation, or have none adequate to support the fabric built on it. The world is too

busy, too idle, and too ill-natured to search out the truth; and indeed they would be sorry to find that their injurious story originated in falsehood or shameful misrepresentation. This would deprive them of some spiteful amusement; and would wrest from them a very convenient instrument of revenging themselves on those whose principles and habits of life they have felt to be a reproach to their own. Innocence, much less penitence and increasing circumspection, will not disarm them; but they are of another spirit than David, and the man of David's temper. He knows that they must have sinful infirmities, whether he discover them or not; and when he perceives them, he treats them with a prudent and affectionate discrimination. If they are mere weaknesses, he charitably bears with him; if they prove to be openly offensive, he charitably feels, and even expresses indignation if necessary; with Paul he says, "who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" If they offend himself through infirmity, or on testifying a due sense of the wrong done him, he forgives them. When their character is injured, he defends it against ignorance, the love of talking, and malignity. And he will not give up his opinion of them, formed deliberately, and on sure grounds; he will not cease to be their companion on the footing of religious connexion and brotherly love, for poverty, or the neglect, or the contempt, or the persecution of the world. They may, in their days of trial, have to

say of other men what Paul said concerning his first examination before the Emperor of Rome, "no man stood with me; but all men forsook me;" but of the man of David's spirit they will have to say, what Paul at the same time said of David's Lord, "notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me."

II. I hasten to set before you some motives to imitate David's example, and be "companions of all those who fear God, and keep his precepts." They who imitate this example, truly love their brethren in the Lord. The brethren are amiable, for the pleasure and profit of their society and conversation; and many love them for these reasons only; in loving them thus they love self supremely, and the brethren so far as they flatter and gratify self, and no farther. The man of David's spirit loves them for God's sake, and for the image of God in them; and he knows this to be the case, because, while he experienceth peculiar pleasure in yielding obedience to this part of the divine law, he makes conscience of keeping all its precepts, 1 John v. 2, 3. Now, it is fellowship with the saints from love to God so proved that is to be understood, whenever I speak of being companions of those who fear God and keep his commandments.

1*st*, Imitate David, for this will prove your relation to God and his Christ, and your right to all the blessings of salvation. How important is it to

ascertain these points, to both your peace and progress in holiness! And how important is your fellowship in love with the people of God, which proves the reality of religious profession and hopes. Have you tremblings of heart, because ye are by nature under the sentence of death?—"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." Are you anxious to ascertain your interest in Christ Jesus? "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, saith our Lord, if ye have love one of another." Would ye know whether you are born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God? Know that every one that loveth him that begat, loveth also him that is begotten of him." Do ye inquire into the intimacy of your union with God, and the suitableness of your love to God? The beloved disciple saith, "if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us!" In a word, if ye walk in love as companions of those who fear God, you have an evidence of your right to all the blessings of the covenant well ordered and sure." Jer. xxxii. 39—41.

2d, By frequenting the society of those who fear God, you will promote your own spiritual improvement and comfort. There is no society from which you can derive so great honour and happiness as from theirs; "for truly, their fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son, through the influence of the ever blessed Spirit."

When you speak often to one another, fearing him and thinking on his name, you will have God for your attentive hearer, who will cause a book of remembrance in your favour to be written before him, that he may number you with his jewels, and treat you with all the tenderness due to beloved children, Mal. iii. 16, 18. Well may you depend on the friendship of those whom God pronounceth to be faithful; in your prosperity they will rejoice before the Lord with you, and chasten your mirth; in sorrow they will mourn with you before the Lord, and sanctify and sweeten your griefs; in difficulties they will counsel you with wisdom that cometh from above, and enlighten your path; in your offending, they will reprove you, "and it shall be an excellent oil," to invigorate for more vigorous and successful wrestlings; in your trials they will support and serve you, as friends who love always, as brothers born for adversity; and, in whatever situation you are, as you always need a wisdom and a strength better than your own and theirs together, you will enjoy their "effectual fervent prayer, which availeth much"—which availeth to the out-pouring on you of all the blessings needful to salvation with comfort. By means of this society you are more effectually rendered independent of and preserved from that whose "communications corrupt good manners;" in it you breathe the sweet and wholesome air of peace and holiness; here, as "iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the counte-

nance of his friend;" here you receive new incentives to love and good works.

3d, By imitating David, you will greatly advance the general interests of the kingdom of grace. The enlargement of our Lord's kingdom ought to be near your heart. And what mean these, your reiterated prayers, "thy kingdom come?" What mean these your liberal contributions to send the scriptures, to send the gospel to the ends of the earth, if the extension of the boundaries of the church is not dear to you? If ye would lend effectual aid to this glorious and promised object, associate much with those who fear God. This will not cut you off from the society of the men of the world, when the common business of life, the duties of humanity and Christian benevolence, render it incumbent on you to frequent it. But, while the world will readily accept your co-operation in promoting the worldly good of society, and ye should never withhold it when it is not inconsistent with your duty to God, remember that the children of this world are in fact leagued together against the genuine spirit and the spiritual operations of those who fear God, except in so far as they seem subservient to their temporal policy. By being companions of those who fear God, you will oppose to this host a small but invincible phalanx, which shall, under its divine leader, advance conquering, and compelling to come into the obedience of Christ, by weapons which are not carnal, but mighty through God. By being companions of those who

fear God, you will mutually cherish Christian fortitude, and rise above that "fear of man which is a snare," and you will check and overawe the otherwise intimidating insolence and persecuting spirit of the world. By associating together on religious principles and for religious ends, you will call forth and unite more wisdom in planning and more force in executing well-digested schemes for enlarging the kingdom of Christ. And by Christian fellowship you will exhibit in your collected examples a more illustrious and alluring light of purity, and love, and happiness, than the same number of lamps scattered over society at considerable distances, and many of them placed in obscure situations. You will easily unite and mingle in sacred views and affections, and you will thus sweetly increase the lustre of each other, and your power of doing good. If one drop of oil on fire will fill the space of two square miles with light in the darkness of night, how great a space will be filled with light by a great number of lamps, each containing countless drops of oil, burning with augmenting and steady splendour! Many shall see it, and shall fear, and believe, and turn unto the Lord. "Ye are the light of the world,—let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

SERMON XV.

ROMANS xii. 11.—" Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

To obey Christ with the warmth of lively and constant affection is what the apostle enjoins in the text. If the followers of Jesus should strive to please him, if affections should be proportioned to their objects, and to the means of attaining their ends, this temper ought to be cultivated by all Christians. And, if God hath rendered them capable of those exercises which promote fervour of spirit in serving the Lord, Christians have no cloak for their sins of lukewarmness, of inconstancy, or of zeal not according to knowledge. With a view to inculcate rather than to prove these truths, very generally acknowledged, and, alas! almost as generally overlooked in practice, I propose to consider, 1*st*, the nature,—2*d*, the necessity,—and 3*d*, the means, of spiritual fervour in the service of the Lord.

I. Let us consider the nature of spiritual fervour in the service of the Lord. Whatsoever the Christian does ought to be done unto the Father as

the supreme end of all things, and by Jesus Christ as the one mediator between God and man, Col. iii. 17. And what can be more reasonable than that the Christian should, in all things, aim at the glory of the Father, " by whom are all things, who is the Judge of all, and who gave his Son, that we might have life through him?" Or what can be more reasonable than that the Christian should in all his actions rely on the merit and strength, as well as execute them according to the command, of the beloved, in whom alone himself and his services can be accepted? Unto this obedience God setteth apart his people in their regeneration, by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ through the sanctification of the Spirit, 1 Pet. i. 2. Whether therefore, he is diligent in business, or instant in prayer—whether he rejoiceth with them who rejoice, or weeps with them who weep, he ought to serve the Lord Jesus,—he ought, as it is elsewhere expressed, " to do all unto him, and in his name." Nor is it enough that the Christian do all in word or in deed, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, unto the Father,—he is required to do this, in spirit, *i. e.* with his spirit, Rom. i. 9; from the heart, Eph. vi. 6—nay, with " fervent spirit."

This spiritual fervour in doing all unto Christ, more particularly implies activity, vehement exertion, and a passionate desire of attaining its end. We never say that the professing Christian who seeks his own ease, who cries, " yet a little folding

of the hands to sleep," hath fervour of spirit. This quality is never attributed save to the man who always "abounds in the work of the Lord." In this respect spiritual fervour is opposed to spiritual slothfulness, which is inactive and immovable in divine things. When the Christian is fervent in spirit, he is not only always in action for the honour of his master; but "whatsoever his hand findeth to do, that he doth with all his might;" his language is, "in this cause I will gladly spend and be spent." In this respect, fervour is opposed to lukewarmness, which acts with feebleness and languor. And as we seldom give ourselves much trouble about what we do not love, or make great efforts for the sake of it, spiritual fervour, which implies activity and exertion, must also imply love for what the fervent Christian aims at and does, and a passionate desire of success. Hence, as in common life, the man who acts from compulsion and with unwillingness is not said to act with fervour, how great soever his exertions and activity may be; so, in the spiritual life, he alone is entitled to be called fervent in spirit who can say, "My meat is to do the will of my Lord and Saviour."

We find little difficulty in distinguishing spiritual fervour from the opposite temper, and the attentive observer will find no great difficulty in distinguishing it from the many imitations of it to be met with in the world. False fervour originates in self-love, or in constitutional warmth; and is, consequently,

blind and impetuous: true fervour originates in the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and is always according to knowledge and sober mindedness. He who is heated by false fervour is more frequently zealous and even furious for what is wrong than for what is right: he who is animated by the true, is zealously affected only in a good thing, and "is holy in all manner of conversation. The former is ardent for some and regardless of other divine precepts: the latter esteems all the precepts of God concerning "all things to be right. The former acts without discernment or choice in obeying the laws of God, and he is heedless of the manner of yielding this seeming obedience: the latter performs every action in a becoming manner, and in its proper season. The one is commonly irritable and severe, unjust and violent; the other is meek and lowly, long-suffering and forbearing in love. In a word, false fervour is a fire of thorns—it crackles, it blazes, it expires in the smoke of bitterness; sometimes it is a fiery meteor, that shoots rapidly across the sky, that creates alarm, that dazzles for a moment, but the sudden extinction of it increaseth the gloom of night. On the other hand, the path of the fervent in spirit is "like the morning light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." In old age he holds on his way with graceful vigour. His eye is directed to something beyond the boundaries of this earth, it beams with the bliss of heaven. Fre-

quent communion with God maketh his face to shine. Devotion and charity adorn him, and seem to anticipate the moment " when his Lord shall change his body and fashion it like unto his own glorious body."

If any one should here ask, " wherefore all this fervour?" Would not the question surprise the serious Christian? For does not the character of the fervent in spirit, whether it relates to God or to man, commend itself to the consciences of men, " as lovely and of good report?" Were a seraph to animate a human frame, would not his flame of heavenly fire thus burn and shine? Was it not in this manner, Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, came forth as a bridegroom, and as a strong man, rejoiced to run his appointed race? To keep within bounds, is it reasonable that worldly men should pursue the approbation of fellow-creatures with vehemence; and is it not far more reasonable that the Christian should seek the approbation of his Creator with fervour of spirit? Shall this momentary life, and its palling enjoyments, be counted worthy of ardour and toils; and is eternal life, with its ever-new delights, entitled to nothing but cold desires and abortive endeavours? Do the labours of the literary, of the military, of the mercantile, or rural life, strike fire from the energetic mind; and shall the duties of the Christian life, which influence our interminable state, benumb and paralyze the soul? God forbid! for,

II. Spiritual fervour is reasonable and necessary, because it is acceptable to God, suitable to the great objects of it, and because it is indispensable to the right performance of the Christian's duty. Spiritual fervour is reasonable and necessary, because,

1*st*, It is most acceptable to God, whose judgment is unerring, and whose approbation is of the last importance to us. The judgments of men are hasty and superficial,—but the Lord looketh on the inward part, the Lord weigheth the spirit, and his judgments are right. The judgments of men are variable and contradictory, and can have no influence beyond this transient life; but the judgment of God is unchangeable, and irreversibly fixes our happiness or misery in eternal ages. How indispensable, therefore, is fervour of spirit! For it is most acceptable to God. Why does the Holy Ghost require it in the text? Why does our Lord express his utter abhorrence of lukewarmness? Why are the favourite servants of God called "burning and shining lights?" Why are angels called "flames of fire?" Why is Jesus styled "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," and the ever blessed God himself love? Why are all these things so, unless a fervent spirit in the service of the Lord is most acceptable, and lukewarmness most detestable, to the Judge of all the earth?

2*d*, Spiritual fervour is most reasonable and necessary, because most suitable to the great and interesting objects of this affection. God and salva-

tion are the objects of the Christian's regard. What a variety of considerations, and every one of them most eminently calculated to render the Christian "fervent in spirit!" He cannot think of his God all perfect without love—he cannot remember the riches of his grace without gratitude—he cannot meditate on his promises without joy. And must he not love God with all his heart and soul, with all his strength and mind, when he clearly perceives the import of this appeal, "Who in heaven can be compared with God? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?" Must not his gratitude be the liveliest emotion, his language the most glowing expression, his life the uninterrupted hymn of thankfulness, when he ponders on his Jesus, and pardon, and grace, and life? And must not his joy be joy unspeakable and full of glory, when he anticipates in the earnest of the Spirit, "the riches of the glory of God in the inheritance of the saints?" If these considerations do not render a man habitually fervent in spirit according to his measure, the eyes of his understanding have not been opened, the stony heart hath not been taken out of his flesh—his heart is harder than the nether millstone.

The salvation of his soul, thus connected with the glory of God, is also the object of the Christian's fixed regard; and can he be cold or indifferent in a matter of such moment? Who among the sons of men can tell the worth of the soul better than he

can? By the light of God's word and Spirit he discovered this worth in its state of estrangement from God, while it lay a noble ruin of what the Creator had formed it at first, yet possessing a capacity of restoration; and then he wept over it with admiration, and anguish, and almost hopeless desire. He saw, and he still sees, its inconceivable value in the amazing price of its redemption,—in the precious blood of the Son of God, shed for the remission of sin; and he feels its worth now that it is renewed after the image of God. Its powers of thinking, and acting, and enjoying; its increasing purity, and its immortality, impress him with a deep and lasting sense of the inestimable importance of his soul. And must he not assiduously care for it,—must he not passionately desire and eagerly pursue its happiness? He must, he actually is doing this. He is constantly saying, "what would it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And "he walks, he runs, he presseth forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

3d, Spiritual fervour is reasonable and necessary on account of the nature and number of the Christian's duties. His duties are indispensable, whether we consider them as the commandments of God, the proper fruit of Christian principles, or a necessary qualification for the enjoyment of God, in time or in eternity. And, without fervour of spirit the Christian could not perform them in the manner

required. The life of the Christian is a life of self-denial and amendment; when employed as he ought to be, he is daily ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well; he is daily laying aside some weight, and the "sin that doth easily beset him." And could any thing like indifference, think ye,—could any thing short of holy fervour in the service of the Lord, make him cut off a right hand, and pluck out a right eye? The life of the Christian is a life of positive and active holiness. He "is the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." It is not enough to perform some good works now and then; it is necessary to perform a great number, and to perform them every moment of our lives. For we are servants; if we are true Christians, we are bought with the precious blood of Christ; we are not our own; our souls and bodies, our time and talents, belong to God. And can we always abound in the work of the Lord without being fervent in Spirit? This is not all; we must labour to give every one of our good works the highest degree of excellence of which it is capable, —to render it as conformable to the mind of God as possible,—"to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." The slothful Christian is meanly contented with the lowest degrees of holiness. His is the garden of the sluggard. With difficulty, if at all, is he recognised to be a Christian. And can we lay aside our native sloth, become unwearied in well-doing, and aspire to the eminence and comforts

of the highest degrees of holiness, without great watchfulness, application, and activity, or can we practise these without fervour of spirit? In a word, there are many obstacles to the faithful discharge of duty. There is in us a natural aversion from it, and an inability to perform it when the aversion is overcome; there are the opposition of wicked men, and the malice, and cunning, and power of Satan, to be surmounted in the discharge of duty. If these have occasioned no struggle in our experience, it is plain that we are out of the right way. Our path may be flowery in the unsanctified eye, but it leadeth down to the gates of death. For in the way of life everlasting, we must encounter and overcome the devil, and the world, and the flesh. In the view of such enemies how will the slothful man act,—or will he act at all? Will he not remain rooted to the spot by terror,—or flee to the right or to the left hand, crying, "there is a lion in the way?" or will he not turn hastily back, or move slowly forward, as he is prompted by fear or feeble desire? On the other hand, the sight of danger, the number and animosity of foes, formidable to the faint-hearted only, call forth the energy of the fervent Christian, and kindle into a flame his desire, his hope of victory. "Nay, in all these things," exclaims he "we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." And, in these circumstances, who can persevere but the man who is thus strong in the Lord, and in the power

of his might? As soon shall the hand of the sluggard make rich,—as soon shall the arm of the coward prove victorious, as any other shall gain heaven than the violent who take it by force.

What hath been said shows the reasonableness and necessity of a fervent spirit in the service of the Lord,—shows that without a considerable portion of it we cannot accomplish the great work assigned us in order to salvation,—that without this we cannot please God, we cannot act consistently with our own views, we cannot fulfil our duties in a becoming manner. It is difficult to convince those who take the example of merely civilized society for their model of piety or morals, that, notwithstanding the approbation bestowed on them by judges like themselves, they are not Christians; yet what is more evident from these reasonings, and from every page of Scripture, than that they are not Christians who do not affectionately endeavour, through the mediation of Christ, to please God in all things? May God render useful to them what hath already been spoken! With regard to those who have been serving the Lord, but not with activity, not with all their might, not with a passionate desire of success, and are now lamenting that they cannot be numbered with the good and faithful servants of the Lord, there are good hopes concerning them. In a dependence on the blessing of the Holy Spirit, they are desirous of attending to and of employing the means of God's appointment for quickening their devout affections,

and for perfecting holiness in his fear. To gratify their wishes, with a sincere desire that it may promote their improvement, I proceed to consider,

III. Some of the means of spiritual fervour. This temper is the gift of God, and the work of his Holy Spirit. It is communicated and perfected through means which at once evidence the sovereignty of God, and require the diligent use of our rational faculties. Means are therefore to be used, but always in obedience to the divine appointment and in dependence on the Holy Ghost, who alone can render them effectual.

1*st*, Remembering this, Christians, in order to promote your spiritual fervour, study to strengthen your faith in the things which belong to your everlasting peace. 2 Cor. x. 15; Col. ii. 7. He who firmly believes in these things can have nothing so much at heart as to work out his salvation, as to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." For faith worketh by love. Do ye firmly believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him; and must ye not fear, and love, and obey God? Do ye believe in the evil of sin,—and must ye not abhor it, and yourselves polluted by it? Have ye received Christ as made of God unto you "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" must ye not so walk in him, not after the flesh but after the spirit—must ye not add toyour faith, virtue and knowledge, temperance

and patience, brotherly-kindness and charity? Do ye believe in the offices of the Holy Spirit; and must ye not thirst for and cherish his quickening, and sanctifying, and comforting influences? Do ye believe that ye must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and receive the things done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be bad; and will ye not strive to purify yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord? Do ye believe that Jesus cometh quickly at an hour when men think not; and will ye not gird up the loins of your mind, trim your lamp, and keep your oil burning, that you may be always ready to bid him welcome, saying, "Even so come, Lord Jesus?"

Notwithstanding his sincere belief of these truths, the true Christian daily experienceth the movements of corruption subdued but not expelled from his heart, and he may sometimes fall into even open offences; but if he do so, he looks to inward corruption as the root of all evil, and to open offence as its baneful fruit, with sensations of the keenest sorrow, with much shame and confusion, and with humble confession and prayer, crying, "Lord, help mine unbelief," "Lord, increase my faith, that I may bring forth fruits meet for repentance." But, though he who hath faith is not perfect, though he is only tending to perfection, surely the man who sins presumptuously, or from habitual carelessness, cannot be said to believe in the grand truths of the

gospel. How can we seriously think that that man is inadvertent who goes on in his sin when conscience resists, remonstrates, and suggests divine truths dissuading him from his iniquity? How can we think that he hath faith who sins in this presumptuous manner? Let it be granted that he daily transgresseth from inadvertency, for many plead inadvertency who have no right to make this claim. But how can we suppose that the man has faith who is sinning daily through carelessness? We can suppose a reasonable man to be so occupied with some interesting object, as to lay his hand on what will burn him, forgetting for a moment the quality of the substance; but we cannot believe that the same thing will happen frequently to a man in his senses. No more can we believe that a man can sin daily through carelessness, and possess the faith which is of the operation of the Spirit of God, nor is there any instance of such forgetfulness. To be Christians, we must sincerely believe the essential truths of the Word of God to salvation—to be fervent Christians, we must entertain a lively and uniformly practical faith in them. Let hitherto inconsiderate persons seek for this faith without delay; and let truly serious persons, especially languid Christians, daily search the Scriptures, that their precious contents may become familiar to them; let them often meditate on those particularly which they are most inclined to forget; let them intreat the Spirit of God so to imprint them on their hearts, that neither

time nor temptation shall weaken their practical influence; let them in all cases employ these truths to quicken and invigorate them in their Christian course; and that these may acquire a greater reality, magnitude, and nearness in their eyes, let them devoutly receive the sacraments "as seals of their righteousness by faith." Were we frequently and in earnest to excite our faith in this manner; we might reasonably hope that, by the blessing of God, it would acquire new strength, quicken and purify our hearts, regulate our whole conduct, and render us active and unwearied in our endeavours to comply with the gracious purpose of him "who gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

2d, Study to grow in the love of God, that ye may be "fervent in spirit." Your exertions to please God will always be in exact proportion to your love of him. "If any man love me," saith our Lord, "he will keep my commandments." Study, therefore, to grow in the love of God. Seek a more intimate acquaintance with his perfections; fix your attention on the sin and consequent misery of mankind; meditate on the love of God in Jesus Christ, and on your own experience of this love—continue musing on these till the fire burn. While ye present this grateful sacrifice on the altar of your heart, and wait for the manifestation of God, the Spirit will descend from heaven as fire, and wrap

it in a holy flame. And when he sheds abroad the love of God more abundantly in your hearts, none of the divine commandments will seem grievous unto you; ye will keep them all with your whole heart.

3d, Remember the importance and difficulty of salvation. Whatever is known to be necessary to our happiness, and at the same time difficult in the attainment, calls forth our whole vigour and activity. Forget not, then, the importance of eternal life, and that the never-fading wreath of glory is inseparably connected with the fight now to be maintained, and the victory now to be won. Remember, that every moment has its appointed duty, and that there is no such thing as standing still in the Christian course; that every stop not only carries us backward at last, but actually deprives us of a part of our inclination and our strength to pursue our way. Remember that the Christian life is a race to be finished we know not how soon; and instead of thinking of standing still, ye will feel the necessity of putting forth your whole strength, and of doubling your diligence. Remember the difficulties of the Christian life, but so as not to forget the Author and Finisher of your faith. "He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world. If God be for you, who can be against you? Quit ye, therefore, like men; be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." If ye are animated with these views and sentiments, ye will resemble prudent travellers on a dangerous road, whom every thing reminds

of their condition, and every thing quickens in their journey. If the sun of prosperity shine on you, you will not waste your precious time basking in its beams, or turning aside to enjoy the flowery mead or the murmuring stream; ye will advance as far as possible during the favourable season, and the gay colours, the sweet odours, or the soft music of temporal enjoyments will not retard your course,—they will only serve to refresh you amid the fatigues of an uninterrupted journey. The little cloud no bigger than a man's hand, much more the bursting thunder-storm of adversity, will accelerate your steps towards the happier climes of unclouded and eternal day.

4*th* and *lastly*, Guard against worldly-mindedness. The love of the world is enmity against God. The goods of the world are difficult and uncertain in the attainment; they are unsatisfactory and precarious in the enjoyment: when most profitable, it is to the body chiefly, and they are oftentimes rocks and quicksands on which many professing Christians have made shipwreck of their faith. The world bears "vanity and vexation of spirit" imprinted on it in large characters; "he that runs may read;" and yet one would think the multitude take this inscription for the highest commendation, or whence this prevailing indifference to divine things, and this ardent affection for things seen and temporal? "Be ye not conformed to the world; love not the world, neither the things of the world." Guard against the love of things forbidden; guard espe-

cially against the immoderate pursuit of lawful objects. This is the most common and dangerous snare in the world to the Christian. Often does it lead him far astray while he persuades himself that he is running in the path of duty. Set not your affections on things on earth, but on things in heaven; for this world and its dangerous, cloying, and perishing enjoyments are not once to be compared with the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for all of you who are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation. Lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth easily beset you, especially the love of the world, "and run with patience the race set before you, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down on the right hand of the throne of God."

To conclude, to what is lukewarmness, or sloth, or inactivity in the service of the Lord owing but to weak faith, languid love, false views of the importance and difficulty of the work and nature of salvation, and particularly to the love of the world, as the source of all the rest? O, how criminal it is to give little credit to the word of God, who cannot lie,—to be almost indifferent to God, who is love,—to be negligent in the concerns of the immortal soul! And for what is all this guilt contracted? Is it not for what exceedingly aggravates the crime?

Is it not for a world unsubstantial and fleeting as the vanishing vapour? Is it not for an atom of this passing world? What excuse can be pled for these crimes in time past by those now acknowledging their lukewarmness? How much more inexcusable will they become from this day forward if they continue in this sluggish temper! Lukewarm Christians, have ye not in some respects beheld your face as in a glass; and when ye go away, will ye forfeit the blessings of him who heareth the word and doth the same, by straightway forgetting what manner of persons you are? When exhorted, have you not resolved to obey the injunction in the text? In your religious exercises have ye not been excited to fervour of spirit by the Holy Ghost; and will ye go away and resist and quench the Holy Spirit,—will ye do despite unto the Spirit of grace? Over the sacred symbols have ye not vowed to serve the Lord with your whole heart; and will ye return to the world to violate that oath, and to trample on the Son of God? If ye tread in the footsteps of the wicked and slothful servant, must ye not be cast with him into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? But we hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation. May God realize these hopes by his good Spirit! May he so draw you by the cords of love and the bands of a man that ye shall run speedily after him,—that ye shall be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

SERMON XVI.

ZECH. xii. 10.—"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

THE building of the second temple promoted by Cyrus had been discouraged by Ahasuerus, and prohibited by Artaxerxes. These obstructions, and the lapse of time co-operating with the natural backwardness of man to the Lord's work, so cooled the zeal of the Jews who had returned from the captivity, that they totally neglected the temple for the first two years of the reign of Darius Hystaspes. The prohibition was no longer in force; it was buried in forgetfulness with its usurping author; the reigning prince discovered no unfriendly disposition to the Jewish nation or to their once favourite design. Alas! the strong blast of temptation sometimes in a moment hurls headlong the man of God from the pinnacle of his first love, but it requires the chastisement, the grace, the painful exertions of years to enable him to climb again to the towering summit. For two years, the Jews, fallen from their former zeal, casually cast their eyes on Mount Zion;

the prospect of drawing near unto God in the sanctuary waxeth more faint; no busy workman appears on the temple-wall; the joy of successful effort is not heard; the fall of some ponderous ruin resounds, while the wind unrestrained murmurs through the roofless pile. Some aged captive, as he recalls the departed glory and joy of the former temple, the chains of tedious bondage broken, and the holy ardour of return, gazes on this contempt of God, this reproach of Israel, this sin of a forsaken people, and weeps more bitterly than ever he had done by the rivers of Babylon. The nation eyes it with indifference; they are busied in completing their own abodes, or in cultivating their fields and vineyards. God is angry with them, yet his anger is tempered with mercy. He sends a famine, but he raises up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to make known his will to them. Zechariah encourages the Israelites to finish the temple; he foretells the glory with which Messiah's presence shall fill it; the miseries of the Jews under the Maccabees; their rejecting of the promised Saviour; their dispersion and return to their native land; and their final conversion, together with some remarkable events in their history during the latter ages.

In the verses preceding the text, Jehovah is represented discomfiting the enemies who shall attack his people after their return to Judea, but before their final conversion; and then, speaking in his own person, and promising great things to be done

for them about the time of that temporal deliverance, he says, " and I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

It is God who thus speaks. Who but God can pour down on men the spirit of grace and supplications here promised? And though a pure Spirit, he, whose bowels are said to yearn over his people, whose hand is said to be opened to supply their wants, may also be said to be pierced when his majesty is despised, his goodness abused, and his grace turned into wantonness. According to this figure, Simeon said to the mother of Jesus, " a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also;" and the sacred historian of the Jewish institutions says, " the Israelitish woman's son pierced through the name of the Lord, and cursed." Levit. xxiv. 11. It is more likely that the expression in the text is not figurative, and that he who said long before by the same spirit of prophecy, " they pierced my hands and feet," here again alludes to the sufferings of his human nature, to be united to his Deity in the fulness of time. He is " the angel of God's presence," intrusted with the care of the ancient church; he gives the Spirit to convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment; he is " Jehovah," and

also " the Son of man,"—" taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain for the sins of his people, and who, being raised from the dead to the right hand of God in heaven, shall come with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Rev. i. 7. It is the Son of God who speaks in the text.

And he speaks to " the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem," to the remaining posterity of his ancient people. In the wilderness of old Christ was tempted, and at Jerusalem was crucified and slain by their forefathers; and the accursed deed was repeated, as it were, by them in their long-continued approbation of it—in their unbelief and hard speeches against him—in opposition to the increasing stream of evidence from prophecy and providence against them. And what shall the receiving of them again be but life from the dead? With God all things are possible; but who could have expected this life, unless he who hath the keys of death, who openeth and no man shutteth, had said, " I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

The time of this effusion is obscurely hinted.

After the Jews have borne their shame and all their trespasses, God will bring back their captivity; he will bring them back to their native land; a powerful people from the north will attempt to dispossess or destroy them, but God will preserve them and overthrow their enemies: "Then shall the house of Israel, saith the Lord, know that I am the Lord their God: neither will I hide my face from them any more, for I have poured out my Spirit on the house of Israel." All that we certainly know is, that this effusion shall take place about the time of a remarkable deliverance from a powerful enemy, and this deliverance shall be wrought soon after their final return to Judea. For this effusion God will prepare their minds by striking dispensations of his providence, accompanied by more secret operations of his grace,—by these he will awake them to more serious thought, to a more deep insight into his character and rightful authority, and especially of his goodness and mercy.

When they are thus instructed, "He will pour out on them the spirit of grace and supplications." An extraordinary measure of divine influence is necessary to convert the Jews, to bring them from death to life, and such an influence our Lord graciously promises. The Holy Ghost is "the Spirit of grace and supplications"—his divine influences are compared to dew and to plentiful rains, and these Christ dispenseth in measures suited to the occasion. When we reflect that the Holy Ghost is

" the power of God, and essentially good, and that he comes according to the divine counsels, ratified by the blood of Christ," we must be convinced that he will accomplish the end of his mission, how difficlut soever to be attained. And Christ hath promised to send him in due time to the Jews in all his power and benignity: " I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." He will flow on them from the sovereign good-will of God; he will come to them with the most merciful purposes; he will produce on them the most gracious change; he will render them and their services acceptable to God; he will draw out their hearts and affections to the Most High; he will teach and embolden them to pray; he will communicate frequency and fervency to their supplications; and he will prepare them for the suitable improvement of more ample discoveries of God unto them, Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27; Is. lix. 20; and Rom. xi. 26, 27.

When they are under these gracious influences of the Spirit, " the Redeemer shall come to Zion, the Lord God shall come," xiv. 5. When the Spirit descends in abundant effusion, their expectations shall be from on high, as they generally were at the time Christ came in the flesh; their eyes shall be

directed by their affections, they shall look upwards; they shall see the sign of the Son of man in the heavens; they shall see, at least by faith in the scriptures, a white cloud, and upon the white cloud one sitting like the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, Rev. xiv. 14, bearing in his hands and feet the prints of the nails, and in his side that of the soldier's spear; and they shall perceive that themselves inflicted these wounds by the hands of their ancestors, and by their own continued approbation of the accursed deed: "They shall look on me whom they have pierced," saith Christ, "and shall mourn."

They shall now forcibly apprehend the glory and grace of the once contemned Jesus of Nazareth; they shall perceive the guilt of their fathers in actually crucifying the Prince of Life, the criminality of their own continued approbation of this atrocious act, and the manifold evils to which they have thereby been and still are exposed; they shall understand the nature of Christ's substitution for sinners, and how they have pierced him by all their sins; and these views shall produce in them their proper effect,—"And they shall look on me whom they have pierced, and mourn." Their souls shall be composed and animated by the preceding dispensations of providence; their whole faculties and affections shall be restored by the Spirit; they shall be waiting for brighter manifestations when the Lord shall appear to them; they "shall look on

him," and the object of their contemplation shall appear in such attractive splendour, as to arrest and fill the soul, and excite the most awful and deep, the most permanent and practical sorrow: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

Singular blessings shall follow this mourning in Judea. "A fountain shall be opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem," Zech. xiii. 1; they shall receive pardon and the seal of it; "God will cut off the name of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered," the pure love and worship of God shall for ever prevail; "and he will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land," impostors shall arise no more, Satan shall lose much of his influence, pure and undefiled the word of God shall be taught, and universally received, xiii. 2; Lord, hasten that happy time, when the heart of Israel shall turn unto thee; when the veil shall be taken away, and thou wilt have mercy on them!

From this explanation I am led to make some remarks on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in bringing many of his bitter enemies to the saving acknowledgment of himself; and on the first exercises of such persons under the influence of this saving grace.

I. The posterity of the ancient Jews are bitter enemies of the Lord; and hence we are led to remark,

1*st*, The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in sparing them. How atrociously, how often, how long, have they provoked him; and yet he hath not cut them off, nay, he miraculously preserveth them, scattered, feeble, persecuted outcasts as they are! And is not this an image of the Lord's goodness to many sinners to whom the gospel is preached? Are not they, too, bitter hereditary enemies of Christ? What is worse, are they not enemies to him oft-times in spite of the precept and example, of the prayers and the tears of godly parents? Scorn they not fagots prepared for the burning? Yet, the Lord commandeth them not to be cast into the fire! For years he shields them from the dangers of the deep, from the peril of the sword, and from the ravages of fell disease that encompass them. Wearied and wounded by their levity and indifference, or their injustice and malice, or their debauchery and blasphemy, or by all these, he launches not the thunders of his wrath against them; he spares them; sometimes he snatches them from the very jaws of death, and saves them from going down alive into the pit of destruction. Were the eyes of sinners opened to discover but a part of the deserved wrath and inconceivable horrors from which they have been so long preserved, a sight of the long-suffering patience of Christ would be enough, one would

think, to win them to his love; at least the remembrance of it will fill the eyes of true penitents with tears of holy gratitude, and their mouths with songs of praise. "O God, by thee have I been holden up from my birth; my praise shall be continually of thee." Ps. lxxi. 6.

2d, The Lord shall work a great temporal deliverance for Israel before their conversion: and this leads us to remark, that his grace is oft-times manifested in disposing the sinner's mind for spiritual expressions of his regard by his temporal dispensations. Sinners have no composure of mind to meditate on God; they have no perceptions of God; and they wonder whether it is folly or knavery that disgusts others with their favourite objects, and causeth them to delight in the contemplation of Deity; or their perceptions of him are faint and fearful, averting the eye from him, and hurrying them into new violations of the divine law to procure forgetfulness. An ordinary method of divine goodness is to prepare such persons for conversion by signal dispensations of Providence. Do not some of you know that he composes the mind, disengages it from the world, and fixes it on himself by affliction? Do not others of you know that he awakens from a drowsy indifference by some singular temporal benefit, and bestows it in such a manner as to leave no doubt of its author? The grace of the Spirit hath accompanied these dispensations in a gentle and less perceptible manner; but now, having by them ren-

dered the heart more attentive to divine things, more thoughtful of God, and more watchful of spiritual intimations of his favourable presence, according to the appointment of Christ, the Holy Ghost descends, and occupies, and guides the soul.

3d, After great temporal deliverances wrought for them, and improved by them, the Lord "shall pour out the spirit of grace and supplications" on the Jews; and this leads us to remark, that this also is his special gift to sinners awakened by the dispensations of his Providence previous to their final and complete submission to him. "Except a man be born again of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,"—a law from the operation of which no man is exempted. The Holy Ghost is promised to all the spiritual children of Abraham; Christ hath been made a curse for them, that they might receive the promise of the Spirit; hereby, also, he hath acquired a right to direct and distribute the influences of the Spirit; and having in some measure already awaked him who was asleep, or rather quickened him who was dead, by "the power of the highest" accompanying outward events, he now sends him in the fulness of his enlightening and supplicating virtue,—he poureth him into the heart of the new creature. The sinner was "like the thirsty and ungrateful desert, that bringeth forth nought but barrenness;" but now, as the Spirit descends like plentiful rains, his soul becometh "as the pleasant garden of the Lord," producing

in their season the graces of the divine life, some budding, some in blossom, some bearing fruits newly formed, promising to ripen to the glory of his gracious influences. He who in the day of affliction, or of surprising prosperity, began to suspect his independence, now clearly discovers his absolute dependence on God. He who was not fully satisfied with his state, now sees that it truly is "a state of sin and misery." He who was feeling after God, now beholds him at once, awful and amiable in Christ Jesus, and he desires to reverence and love him. He who knew not how to seek God's favour, perceives that he is led and animated, even while he still doubts and stumbles, by the spirit of grace and supplications. He is no longer at a loss what to ask of God; the Spirit hath by the word shown him his wants, and the all-sufficiency of the Hearer of prayer. His supplication is no longer a burden, a dead weight on him, it hath a soul,—an ascending spirit, that bears it upward to the throne of grace. Instead of going to his knees as to a painful task, he rejoiceth in trembling to seek the face of God; and instead of praying seldom, he prays always, he prays without ceasing. 1 Thess. v. 17. Often-times his lips call on the Lord; more frequently his heart, in solemn silence, supplicates the Father of mercies; at all times, he strives to cherish a dependent, a submissive, a grateful frame of mind.

4th, When the Lord shall have bestowed the spirit of grace and supplications on the Jews, then

he shall appear to them in the heavens; and this leads to remark, that Christ shows himself crucified more clearly and for a longer time than ever he had done before to the enlightened and enlivened soul of his now gracious and supplicating creatures. The Jews shall have some knowledge of Christ, derived from the scriptures, and some clearer views of him under the first teaching of the spirit of grace and supplications; and then they shall, with the bodily eye, see him in the heavens. In the gospel, Christ always exhibits himself as Emmanuel, crucified and slain by sinners, and the only atonement for sin. But sinners seldom look on him; he appears without form or comeliness to them; they see no beauty in him that they should desire him. To the awakened man of gracious temper he appears very differently; he appears as "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely;" he appears as the great atonement, as his own atonement. At other times, Christ has shown himself in his own character in the gospel; but hitherto the thick though floating mists of sin afforded no more than a transient glimpse of the Sun of righteousness; and the weakness of his intellectual eye, so long accustomed to spiritual darkness, and the agitation of his troubled mind, rendered this glimpse more imperfect, and less impressive. Now, Christ by his Spirit already given, dispels the clouds of guilt, purifies the medium through which he is to be viewed, stills the tempest of the mind, strengthens the eyes of the

understanding, and in the same gospel, as in a clear sky, he shines forth in glory and grace, he emits a vital heat and a luminous virtue that interests, and fills, and satisfies the whole soul. "Unto him who feareth God's name, the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams."

II. This leads to make some remarks on the first exercises of Christ's enemies under these influences of his saving grace.

When the Lord shall come and appear unto the Jews in the heavens, "they shall look on him whom they have pierced;" and in like manner when Christ hath, by his Spirit, given an undeniable reality, an irresistible beauty to his image in the gospel,—in that day the humble suppliant "shall look on him." He now perceives with holy affection, and as with the bodily eye, who Christ is, what the nature and end of his sufferings are, and how great an interest he hath in them. These truths make as lively an impression, and as irresistibly constrain him to dwell on them, as if they were embodied before him. He experienceth, in kind at least, all those emotions and affections which the very sight of the Lamb slain, and now seated on the throne, could excite in his present circumstances. In a particular manner, he is penetrated with heartfelt sorrow in the lively contemplation of Christ crucified; and what gives peculiar accent to his grief is, that he sees himself had pierced the Lord. It is a heart-rending deed,

whoever executed it; but when he perceives his own guilt in it, " he mourns."

He not only looks on Christ whom he hath pierced like the Jews, but with them he also " mourns." Let us attend to the three following characters of this grief.

1*st*, There is an inexpressible bitterness in it. This grief resembles the sorrow of a parent for the death of an only child, a first-born—for the death of the object of peculiar parental affection, snatched away while he was indulging the fondest hope of future delight in him, and at a time when, unaccustomed to domestic pain and unprepared for it, his heart was most susceptible of the most grievous wound. But even this grief is inconsiderable compared with that which he feels who looks on Christ whom he pierced. The parent cannot accuse himself of being accessory to the death of his beloved child; this man is conscious of having slain and crucified Christ, who " is flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone," and altogether amiable. Hence he mourns and is in bitterness because he hath by his sins wounded Christ in his glory, and in his soul and body; because he thus wounded him whose delights were with the children of men from everlasting at the very moment when he laboured to save others—to save himself, at the very moment when he laboured to wash away the foul dishonour done to God, and to exhibit Deity more glorious and amiable in the eyes of men and angels. He is amazed and confounded

—he endures an agony of grief and shame—" he openeth not his mouth"—" he smiteth on his breast" —" he weeps bitterly," not for the Son of God, but for himself.

There is an inexpressible bitterness in this sorrow, but there is also an unspeakable joy in it. The mourner comes to smile through his tears, because this grief is so consonant to his reason and conscience, and to the best affections of his heart, that it is grateful to his whole soul ; because it produceth joy in heaven, and proceeds from and confirms his hope of pardon and grace, and of glorifying that beloved Lord whom he had dishonoured and pierced. While he looks at him whom he pierced, and is in bitterness, he would not exchange his grief for the blazing mirth of irreligious men,—he would rather travel through life, looking through his tears to Christ crucified, than ride in triumph amidst the applauses of men, who see not as God seeth: for he already, in some measure, partakes of the blessedness promised to those who mourn after a godly sort, sees through his darkness a beam of celestial light, and tastes in his bitter cup an ineffable sweetness. Matth. v. 4.

2d, There is a permanency as well as a bitterness in this grief. The affectionate nature of the bereaved parent renders this grief desirable. In like manner, the love of the renewed nature enlisteth all the powers and faculties of the mind in its service, and renders grief for having pierced Em-

manuel lasting as life. This grief will not always be as violent as at first: human nature, constituted as it is, and the purposes of divine grace, forbid this, but it will always exist in the heart, Ps. li. 3. This grief is a fountain which bursts forth and flows with violence, till it has, as it were, formed a suitable channel for itself—the stream is never dried up—for the most part it falls with a plaintive murmur on the ear, while it glistens and trembles in the beam of God's reconciled countenance; sometimes, indeed, it again increaseth, rolls like the turbid overflowing waters of the river of Egypt, and for a season seems to desolate, while in reality it rendereth the soul fruitful in every good work. Sin cannot be forgotten by the true penitent: "My sin," saith David, "is ever before me." Sin often presents itself to his mind in retirement—sometimes the memory goes in search of it. The season, the place, the person who witnessed sin,—nay, likeness or unlikeness to these often recall the guilt with nearly the first experienced anguish of soul. Above all, the repetition of sin, which pierces the Saviour anew, anew and more deeply pierces the heart. Hence, grief for sin equals life in duration. Ps. xxxviii. 1—7.

3d, It is not only permanent but practical. The afflicted parents or relatives perceive that the remembrance of their loss cherishes a temper and conduct honourable to God, respectful to the deceased, and beneficial to themselves and others. Aware

that time, occupations, and new incidents tend to weaken this remembrance so dear to their hearts, they set apart some melancholy hour for undisturbed recollection, and with poignant emotion gaze on every memorial of them who are no more. This is the very feast of the mournful heart. And is the child of God insensible, that by the stream of godly sorrow grow love to his Father in heaven, love to his Saviour, charity to men, yielding all the peaceable fruits of righteousness? Will he not be careful to supply that stream which cherisheth these plants of paradise? Doth the afflicted parent feast his grief with the solemn recollection of his departed child; and shall not the Christian cherish the remembrance of his crucified Lord by reading and hearing, by prayer and meditation? Will not the sacrament of the supper be his peculiar delight? If the parent experience a poignant and practical sorrow in contemplating a memorial or picture of his child, will not the Christian gaze with impassioned admiration on the lively image of Christ exhibited in this ordinance—the image of his friend in an agony for him, the image of his great benefactor enduring the pangs of his vicarious sacrifice, the image of his beloved Saviour bequeathed to him with his dying breath, as a precious memorial and pledge of his immortal affection;—and while he thus gazes, will he not "mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son?" and, while he mourns, will not the love of Christ constrain him to devote himself, with full

purpose of heart, with all suitable affections, to the great ends of his dying for sinners.

It may be said, this mourning is impossible or enthusiastic. But how can the mourning of the Christian be less bitter, less permanent, or less practical? What human heart can feel a sorrow adequate to the cause? Hath not God promised and given his word and Spirit to render capable of this mourning? Is it not an evidence of the commencement of the divine life; and the stronger the lamentations, are they not evidences of the more exquisite sensibility, of the more vigorous vital principle from which they proceed? Is there not a war begun and carried on through life in the Christian? Does not the Spirit enlist this sorrow on account of sin against that joy in sin, natural to us, and so strengthened by habit, that "men drink in iniquity like water, and roll sin like a sweet morsel under their tongue?" And can it weaken or finally slay this desire without superior strength, activity, and perseverance to the end of life? Was not the cross appointed to communicate this conquering power to it? Do not they who suitably look on Christ whom they have pierced "mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son?" And while they mourn, do they not also glory, because by the cross they are crucified to the world, and the world to them? In a word, is it not to those who look and mourn that our Lord promises to open a fountain for sin and uncleanness —to take away sin, and seal to them the joy of be-

ing thus purified—to preserve them in the supreme love of God, and in the holiness of his worship, and to guard them against lying teachers, and the father of lies?

1*st*, This subject teacheth the necessity of a deep, and permanent, and practical sorrow for sin, in order to salvation;—that this sorrow flows from clear views of Christ crucified;—that we must previously receive the spirit of grace and supplications from Christ, who shows great mercy in sparing and preparing the mind, often by the dispensations of his providence, for the more complete manifestations of his love;—and consequently, that salvation, with all the means thereof, appertains to the Lord alone.

2*d*, This subject furnisheth a rule by which we ought to try ourselves. Have we felt, acknowledged, and improved the grace of Christ in not cutting us off before conversion; in pouring out his Spirit; and in showing himself in the gospel, as to our mental eye, pierced by our sins? Have we experienced a gracious change in our practical views and in our affections, thence wholly directed to God? Was frequent and fervent prayer our delight then, and is it our constant resource and delight at present? Were the eyes of our mind fixed on Christ crucified? Did this distinct and impressive view excite a deep and heartfelt sorrow for sin that still continues to flow; and are we at due pains to maintain the stream, anxious that it may sweep along with it the pollutions of iniquity, as well as

cherish the plants of divine grace, that "it work repentance not to be repented of?"

3d, This subject exhorteth all,—it exhorteth careless persons to consider the guilt of overlooking sparing mercy;—of continuing insensible to the calls of Providence;—of resisting the Spirit;—and of turning their most serious regards from Christ in his ordinances;—to consider, that if ye persist in this course, ye shall never see him in his graciously melting influences;—that if ye never see him in these, ye must see him coming in flaming fire;—that if ye never wail unto repentance, ye shall unavailingly wail when he consumes you by the brightness of his coming. "Awake, then, ye that sleep; arise, and Christ will give you life."

SERMON XVII.

2 Cor. iv. 10.—" Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

" If any man will come after me," said Jesus, " let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Simon of Cyrene is the only person who literally bore the cross of the Lord. The apostle, and his fellow-labourers in the gospel, obeyed the spirit of our Lord's injunction, and left an example worthy of imitation in all ages. " Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

" The dying of the Lord Jesus Christ" includes the corporeal and mental sufferings of the Son of God in our nature, especially on the cross, " made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." " Bearing about the dying of the Lord in the body," undoubtedly includes in it an outward conformity to it,—but an outward proceeding from an inward conformity to Christ suffering the accursed death of the cross. The apostle could not say, " I bear

about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ," merely because his outward sufferings bore a striking resemblance to those of Christ; otherwise, the impenitent thief who was crucified with the Lord might have used similar language. The apostle employs this expression because he suffered as a member of Christ's body, in the same cause with him, though not as an atoning sacrifice for Christ's sake, and in the spirit of Christ, enduring the appointments of God.

This is an example to be imitated by all Christians in all its essential parts. "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." Blessed be God, these persecutions are light, are nothing in our favoured land, compared with those of the apostles and first Christians. Still, the outward afflictions of life are great, are sometimes an ignominious, and often an agonizing cross; and they ought to be, and oftentimes are, endured as by members of Christ's body, for the glory of God and the good of the church; for the sake of Christ, and in his spirit.

I purpose to consider and illustrate a little the exercises and views of a Christian entitled to speak of himself "as always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ; that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in his body."

I. He lives in the exercises of a sincere faith in the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ. This must be

implied in his bearing it about with him as an object of reverential regard,—especially in his denying himself, and undergoing every hardship to which esteem for it may expose him. He is well acquainted with the nature and ends of Christ's death, "as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile sinners to God." Many things may shake, but nothing can overthrow his belief in these precious truths. What distinguishes him is his experience of its suitableness to his own necessities, and of its divine efficacy. He took it up, and continues to bear it, as the only ransom of his soul, without which the redemption of it must have perished for ever. He took it up, and continues to bear it as the price of the divine favour, and of the heavenly inheritance. He took it up, and continues to bear it as the infallible remedy of all his spiritual distempers, in sickness and health, in prosperity and adversity, in life and in death. He took it up from his deep sense of need on the authority of God, and by the persuasion of the Holy Ghost; and he continues to bear it because it is effectual, in some comfortable measure, to deliver from the sense of divine wrath; to promote the meltings of godly sorrow for sin in his heart; to excite longings after conformity to his blessed image; to render his ordinances desirable and sweet; to take out much of the bitterness in the cup of affliction, and much of the poison in the cup of prosperity; and to confirm the resolution to cleave to him with full purpose of heart. When

he took it up it was heavy, and seemed almost intolerable; increasing acquaintance with its nature and efficacy has rendered it a light burden, an easy yoke.

II. This Christian lives in the exercise of admiring gratitude to Him whose death he bears about in his body. He could not bear about willingly what he esteemed no less disgraceful than afflicting. In the judgment of the world, in the judgment of the natural man, shame as well as pain is attached to the dying of Jesus. The time was when he reasoned and felt in the same manner; nor is he at all times, even now, exempt from the blush of the world, for which he blusheth again as a Christian, nor from the mortification of the world, for which he is again mortified,—when the cross of Christ is peculiarly humbling and painful. These emotions of false shame, or of moral cowardice, and even their consequent acts, are only exceptions from his habit of admiring gratitude,—are only proofs that it is not yet perfect, though of great practical influence. Were not the depravity of man deep as his ignorance is dark, what is there in "the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ," which would not produce admiration and gratitude? When the Christian contemplates this marvellous object in its proper light,—in the light of the word and Spirit of God; instead of being ashamed of it, he counts it his chief honour, as it is his chief happiness. There is not a

part of this great whole which does not reflect honour on him, which is not a source of life and consolation to him called to the high privilege of bearing it. Does the honourable name of the author confer distinction on a deed otherwise obscure? will not the name of Emmanuel, "God manifest in the flesh,"—"a name above every name that is named in this world, or in that which is to come,"—shed a divine lustre over his death itself,—nay, confer on it the highest celebrity? Do the deep and voluntary sufferings of a dignified person exhibit a spectacle of grandeur and interest? and must not the most touching and sublime of these become diminutive and obscure in presence of the voluntary agonies of Jesus, which humanity alone could suffer, and Deity in union with it alone could sustain? Does the end of voluntary sufferings constitute their virtue? how infinitely meritorious are the sufferings of Christ the Lord, which he engaged to undergo for the vindication of the glory of God, and for the salvation of his perishing people,—the most exalted and comprehensive ends of which the human mind has any conception! Is the perfection of character most clearly manifested in the depths of painful humiliations? never did the perfection of moral excellence appear so rich in varied graces, or so transcendent in degree, as in the voluntary abasement of him "who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God." Humility and grandeur of soul; sweet tenderness and

invincible fortitude; awful reverence for the justice of God, bruising and putting him to grief, and unshaken confidence in his faithfulness and his love; unquenchable zeal for the honour of God, and love for the salvation of sinners; formed the magnificent rainbow of moral excellence which encircled his dying head. Is it honourable even to fail in an arduous and virtuous undertaking? what glory belongs to Christ, who has completed every part of his undertaking,—who has said before God and the universe, "it is finished,"—who has prevailed in suffering, and conquered in dying! Has a successful result crowned a rash enterprise and imprudent conduct with the wreath of victory among men? what crown of glory and triumph is sufficiently resplendent for Christ, who has wisely undertaken and prudently conducted his warfare to a termination the most splendid and beneficial? It is not the unrestrained exercise of a righteous human government, and the civil and religious happiness of earthly empires, that are secured by his victory. It is the establishment of the universal moral empire of God over the earth; it is the illustration of all the attributes of God in glorious harmony through eternity; it is the deliverance, and honour, and felicity of myriads of perishing sinners, for ever and ever; and the confusion and everlasting wretchedness of all who will persist in opposing, despising, and gainsaying his efforts to save. "This is the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ." The Chris-

tian is gone forth in a perilous warfare, and this is the banner which he displays, not with blushing distrust, but with honourable exultation and martial confidence, mingled with an admiring and devoted gratitude. Hence, he celebrates the glory, benevolence, and unbounded mercies of Christ to himself and to others, and ascribes to him the dominion and power which are the rewards of his victorious conflicts and sufferings. Rev. i. 4, 5. Hence, "he is not ashamed of the gospel," which displays and exhibits the dying of the Lord, because "it is the power and the wisdom of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." Hence, he exults in the cross, and trembles lest he should be tempted to do otherwise; and invokes the influence of that grace which taught him to value it, to preserve him in this right mind, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

III. The Christian, entitled to employ the language of the text, lives in the exercise of a holy sympathy with the Lord Jesus Christ dying. The sufferings of the Lord are unparalleled. There is no tragedy so sublime, so deep, so powerful, and of such universal interest. The subject is the salvation of every one who shall escape sin and wrath eternal by the vicarious death of the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And yet while the world weeps for imaginary woes, or woes that are not

interesting to ordinary life, it is sharply reproved by our Lord for its stupid indifference to his sufferings: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." Even those out of whom the heart of stone has been taken, and to whom the heart of flesh,—of divine tenderness,—has been given, complain of a degree of insensibility to the sufferings of Christ, which fills them with amazement, and sometimes with horror. The believer of whom I speak mourns over this; and strives by faith to fix, and soften, and warm his cold heart. Faith evidences the reality of the dying of the Lord; faith cherisheth the hope of its efficacy connected with its reality; and faith substantiates this object of hope in all its heart-affecting glories; placing him under that accursed tree, whereon hangs the Lord of glory in mortal agonies,—under the affectionate glance of that eye which is closing in death from love to him, and under the sprinkling of that blood which flows fast away for the redemption of his immortal soul. When thus advantageously posted by the Lord the Spirit, who delights to lead to an intimate and experimental knowledge of the crucified Saviour, his heart weeps with Christ, and yet his eye may be moistened with no relieving tear. The sorrows of the Lord open up the purest and most plentiful sources of sympathy in his bosom, even when our Lord, perceiving their overflow, saith unto him, "weep not for me, but weep for thyself." On

this occasion, he weeps for Christ suffering as a man, though triumphing as God, but he weeps more for himself than for Christ; just as he labours for the bread that perisheth, but labours more for that which endureth unto eternal life, though Christ hath also said in the same manner, "labour not for the bread that perisheth." He weeps for the sufferings of his Lord in soul and body,—as the tribute of humanity due to him,—as preparatory to the reception of impressions of a higher order,—as preparatory to more spiritual exercises, and a more full communion with the glorious object of his purified sorrow. More especially he grieves for sin, which has cast on the glory and government of God a stain so foul, that nothing but the blood of Emmanuel, as the blood of the everlasting covenant, could wash it away. He grieves for sin, which hath subjected innocence so pure to imputations so criminal, and holiness so entitled to bliss to a curse so terrible. He grieves for his own sin, which has armed heaven, and earth, and hell against him whose love to himself passeth all knowledge. And he grieves for sin, which hath involved in wretchedness inevitable, unutterable, and without end, all who will not yield to the attractions of these sufferings, and be reconciled by them unto their offended sovereign. "He looketh on him whom he hath pierced, and mourneth for him as one mourneth for his only son, and is in bitterness, as one is in bitterness for his firstborn."

IV. The Christian, who is entitled to employ the language of the text, liveth in the endeavour after more spiritual conformity to the dying of the Lord. In laying down his life as a sacrifice for his people, "he left them an example that they should follow his steps." The graces which he eminently exercised have much that is peculiar to the occasion as well as to the person; yet they have much which is suited to all his people in every situation. And he has graciously secured the means of their conformity to him dying in these respects. By his death he secured to himself the right of producing this resemblance to himself in them, Eph. v. 25, 27. And into his dying, as the object of his people's faith, he infused a secret and powerful virtue, which changeth them into his image by drawing them after him, John xii. 32. Under this blessed influence, the Christian, of whom we speak, longs and labours to attain to this spiritual conformity to the dying of the Lord. In this spirit, he saith with Paul, "yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, that I may win Christ, and be found in him,—that I may know the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." He is willing to undergo even the outward sufferings of Christ, according to his measure, for the sake of attaining to the inward conformity to his spirit in suffering. From the author and finisher of his faith dying, he endeavours to derive

power to crucify his corrupt affections—his old man —power to arraign it at the bar of God's judgment— to accuse it by humble confession—to condemn it by passing sentence of eternal condemnation as merited by himself—to fasten it to the cross by stedfast purpose—to use all means for mortifying and slaying it—and for actually putting it to a violent though lingering and painful death, till he can say, "I am crucified with Christ." From the author and finisher of his faith dying, he endeavours to derive power to excite and strengthen those graces which Christ exercised in finishing his great work—power to excite and strengthen humility and love, mercy and meekness, superiority to the world, and obedience to God, till he can say, "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

V. The Christian, who is entitled to employ the language of the text, shuns not corporeal conformity to his dying Lord, when God requires this at his hand. How strong is the language of our apostle on this point: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church." The apostle cannot mean, that he suffered in the room of the Colossians, and atoned by his sufferings in any way, or in any degree, for their

sins; for he solemnly declares, and records his declaration, "By one offering Christ hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified." From this manner of expressing himself, we learn that Christ and his people are one body,—that a certain measure of sufferings is appointed for this mystical body,—that the sufferings of the head alone are propitiatory, and they are also exemplary; while those of his members are only means of edification in Christ,—that their sufferings are called "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," because they are the afflictions appointed to be borne by the members of his body—afflictions which resemble his in their outward circumstances, in the spirit with which they are endured for his sake, and for the good of the church. For these reasons the apostle rejoiced, as will every advanced Christian in his measure, in this corporeal conformity to Christ, when required of him by God. With cheerfulness he resigns the hopes, or even the possession of earthly comforts, and follows him "who had not a place where to lay his head." He rejoiceth when men say all manner of evil against him falsely, "for Christ's sake," who sustained the reproach merited by his people. It is painful to him when friends and relatives treat him with neglect, with contempt, with ridicule, for the sake of his religion; but he remembers Jesus, "who came to his own, and his own received him not." Should bonds, and privations, and deaths abide him, he is enabled to say, "none of these

things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I might finish my course with joy." Sickness, and pain, and the loss of friends, are the common afflictions of Christians among us; and thanks be to God, these may be endured in the spirit of Christ, and as the cross of Christ. To Christian missionaries, subduing the love of country and kindred, undergoing privations the most painful, encountering climates the most inhospitable, and sojourning among tribes the most wretched or the most savage—to them, in modern times, belong the peculiar privilege and glory of "bearing about the dying of the Lord in their body," of treading in the very footsteps of the great apostle of the Gentiles. They are suffering with Christ; "but, if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with them."

VI. The Christian, who is entitled to employ the language of the text, lives in the exercise of serious meditation on the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of solemn application of it to all the purposes of life. We cannot be said to bear about in our body what we do not remember with suitable affections. Faith and love excite to remember the death of Christ: but corruption dwelling in us, the cares and the pleasures of the world, and the suggestions of the evil one, tempt us to forget this interesting event, or to remember it in a way unworthy of its nature and ends. Aware of this, the Christian bemoans his occasional forgetfulness and

his frequent feeble and unsuitable recollections of it. He implores that the spirit of grace and supplication may be poured out on him; and in a dependence on his influence he meditates on the dying of the Lord, he endeavours to realize it, and to look on him whom he has pierced. By the blood shed in it, he is a high priest unto God: and all that the high priest owed to the blood of sprinkling, he owes and is desirous to pay to the blood of the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. By it he purifies and consecrates the morning and evening of each day, as did the pious Israelite, by its type, the morning and evening sacrifice. Nay, he applies it to all his principles, and instruments, and kinds of action,—even as the blood of the ram was put upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron and his sons, and on the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot. Exod. xxix. 20. By this he is bound, and qualified, and enabled to hearken diligently to the word of God to do all his work with all his might, and to walk in the commandments of God with constancy and perseverance. In a more solemn manner he commemorates the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ at the sacramental table. In obedience to Christ's command, in dependence on his blessing pronounced on the ordinance, admirably fitted to renew the image of the crucified Redeemer on his heart, he stirs himself up to prepare for it,

and he comes to it. And through faith, aided by his senses, he learns more of its glorious nature, he experiences more of its power and sweetness, and he acquires more inclination, and wisdom, and strength to bear the "dying of the Lord Jesus Christ in his body always."

VII. Thus, the Christian, entitled to use the language of the text, always exerciseth himself, that the life also of Jesus Christ may be made manifest in his body. When Christians bear about the dying of the Lord in their body, this is a standing memorial of the fact. It is a standing memorial of this wonderful event, and of one of the ends for which it was appointed, namely, the sanctification, with the peace, of all those who believe in it, and of the manner in which our Lord died, in humility, purity, faith, and love to God and man. These are evidences silent and fitted to disarm prejudice, numerous as manifest, and valuable as conclusive,—were men close observers, and inclined to reason from the effect to the cause, as their pretensions to rationality would authorize us to expect. When Christians bear about the dying of the Lord in their body, this is a standing memorial also of the life of the Lord. The life of Christ here meant is, the continuance of his life after his resurrection, when he entered into heaven as a royal priest with his own blood; received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might

dwell among them ; and reigns to communicate life to his people, and to preserve and perfect it amid troubles and trials.

Conformity to the dying of the Lord is a proof of both the reality and efficacy, and of the nature and glory of this life of Christ. It is a proof of the truth and efficacy of this life. A candid and careful examination of the faith, holiness, and perseverance of the apostles and first Christians amid disgrace, and sufferings, and death, will convince men that these could flow from no merely human principle, and be maintained by no merely human power. 1 Cor. xv. 19. On consulting the facts, it is no less clear that the will and power of Christ alone could give these principles existence, and preserve and foster them in circumstances that would either have prevented or destroyed them. John xiv. 6, 19. Whence it follows, that their continuing to exist and to flourish, when nothing but the continued will and power of Christ could protect, and deliver, and support, and comfort those who were distinguished by them, is an undeniable proof of the continued life and divine authority of Christ. 1 Cor. iv. 7—10. As the life of the branches proves the life of the root, and the life of the members proves the life of the head ; so does the living conformity of true Christians to the dying of the Lord establish, beyond a doubt, the glorified life of the Lord, the true vine, into which they had been ingrafted, the exalted Head of the church, to which they had been united. If we consider

the conformity of true Christians to the dying of their Lord as the fulfilment in part of that promise of his, " because I live, ye shall live also," the argument will acquire additional clearness, and consistency, and strength. When Christians bear about the dying of their Lord in their body, this is a proof of the nature and glory of his life, whence theirs is derived, and to a full communion with which it tends. Even now " they are risen with Christ," and " they sit together with him in heavenly places"—not only by faith and hope, but by a participation of his divine nature and blessed life itself. On minute inspection, the impress of our Lord's glorious life may be discovered on the life of his people, who bear about his dying in their body—strange as this may appear to some. Examine narrowly, and do ye not perceive in it the marks of a " divine nature"—of a heavenly elevation of mind, more remarkable amid circumstances the most depressing—of a royal priesthood, adorned with improving sacerdotal sanctity, and exercising something of sovereign power in the service of God—of celestial happiness in its nature, origin, tendency, and strength? Do ye not perceive in their life, which braves the flesh, and the world, and Satan, and death, distinct impressions of that eternity in which their Lord lives, and in which they shall live also?

To prove and exhibit something of the life and glory of the once crucified but now exalted Re-

deemer, would be a sufficient motive to the believer to carry about his dying in his body. But the effects, the consequences of this illustration to himself, to his fellow-men, and to his blessed Lord, give additional energy to this motive. He who shows the life by bearing about the dying of the Lord, becomes an instrument of much good in the hand of God. By this he promotes his own establishment and comfort in the gospel; for he who thus believeth hath the witness in himself; and what can shake the testimony of experience, or mar the peace of him possessing and appreciating it? By this the Christian promotes the edification of other believers, who see in it the confirmation of their own faith; who see in it what animates their drooping hopes, and guides their own infirm steps in their course. By this, the doctrine of God their Saviour is adorned, as a doctrine unto godliness, as a doctrine originating in love, and diffusing love. By this, the kingdom and glory of God, the Author of the scheme, is illustrated and enlarged,—gainsayers are silenced, unbelievers converted, and even the heathen, who see the good works of the true disciple, are led to glorify his Father in heaven. And by this the believer is prepared to run his race with increasing peace and joy, and to finish it in triumph, when he shall be welcomed by many who have gone before him, and have been watching his progress,—by many who have run with him and left him in tears, sweetened by the prospect of that meeting.

But are there not some among you who are not bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ? Can ye say before God that you are trusting in the one sacrifice of Christ for salvation from sin as well as from wrath? Are ye contemplating the once crucified Lord of glory with admiration and gratitude? Do ye endeavour to enter deeply and practically into the sorrows of Christ suffering for the sins of his people? Will ye presume to say you are aspiring after spiritual conformity to the image of the Lord dying? Which of all your afflictions are ye striving to endure in the spirit of Christ enduring the cross? And is there any thing farther from your mind than habitual meditation upon, than habitual application of, the blood of sprinkling to all your principles and instruments of action, and to all your purposes and undertakings?

If then ye bear not about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, ye want the distinguishing badge of a genuine follower of the only Saviour. If ye bear not about with you the dying of the Lord, ye are not in Christ; and if ye are not in Christ, ye are in your sins, ye are under the eternal condemnation denounced against sin. If you do not bear about with you his dying, you proclaim your disbelief of the atoning death, and your denial of the quickening life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you know that there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation.

SERMON XVIII.

Eccles. vii. 1.—" And the day of death than the day of one's birth."

THESE words are spoken, as we learn from the first clause of the verse, of one not only good by the grace of God, but whose " good name is better than precious ointment,"—is to those acquainted with it more sweet and refreshing than the most costly perfumes. The heart which derives new refreshment from this fragrance, increasing with every year of life, cannot easily conceive of a day more happy than the birthday of such a one; but Solomon says, and it must be true, " the day of this one's death is better than the day of this one's birth." Let us meditate on the evidences of this truth, which merits the serious attention of all, and must excite a deep interest in the bosom of those whose relations have fallen asleep in Jesus.

1*st*, The state of the soul is better on the day of death than on the day of birth. On the day of birth, the soul was clothed in flesh, frail, sinful, mortal, and was both polluted by the uncleanness of the body, and mournfully affected by its infirmities; " what is born of flesh is flesh." Joy for the birth of even a first-born could not suppress some

holy affliction of soul on this account in the breast of the Christian parent; nor can these be softened by the melting cries of the helpless heir of sin and mortality. At an after-period, on the day of being born again of the Spirit, how much more bitterly has the child of God cried at having been "brought forth in iniquity!" The approach of death may appal the dying, even while they cleave to him who tasted death for every man, and cherish hope in death; the moment of dissolution may occasion a pang in the heart of surviving Christian relatives, which the longest life and the severest sufferings will weaken, but cannot remove. Even then, while they say with tears, "he or she is dead," they correct themselves, they recall their words, and say, "he or she has entered into life." And, ah! how imperfectly can the most enlightened believer, fettered by his unbelief and sorrows, conceive of the superiority of the state of the soul on the day of death to that of the day of birth! Then was the soul ignorant, unrighteous in its propensities, unholy, and liable to all the dreadful consequences of that state; now, it is made "perfect" in holiness, and righteousness, and knowledge, in a state of favour with God. Earthly friends rejoiced with sorrowing at the entrance of this one into the world; angels who experienced gladness at their renewal in the spirit of the mind, shout aloud for unmixed joy at the completion of the work of God in the soul.

2d, The day of this one's death is better, in re-

spect of the place into which the soul has entered, than the day of his birth. In this world much of the glory of God is to be seen and enjoyed. The children of God are not blind to these beauties, nor insensible to its varied sweetnesses. They delight to gather fresh knowledge of their heavenly Father from the simplest of his works—to converse much with him through the most common—to taste him in all that ministers to their comfort—and to collect from them materials for newer and higher strains in his praise. But, fair and good as this world is, who does not perceive on it the sad marks of the curse for man's sake? Where are the perennial fruits and flowers, the perpetual spring, and healthful clime of Eden, amid which labour was enjoyment and life an animated hymn to God? In vain we seek them under a sun that is hid in thick clouds, or bursts forth with scorching ray; under heavens which are as brass, or pour down torrents of water; in fields that are as iron, or bring forth thorns and thistles; amid storms that rock the earth, and earthquakes and volcanoes that shatter her finest monuments to pieces, and cover her fairest portions with liquid fire. We must look for them "in the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," in which there is no sea, which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine on it—"for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." And thither hath the Most High transplanted these flowers, the absence

of which fills us with sadness, to rise to a beauty of colour and a richness of fragrance not to be attained in this unkind soil, this unfavourable clime.

3d, The day of this one's death is better, in respect of the society into which the soul hath been admitted, than the day of his birth. God hath a kingdom in this world conquered from the kingdom of Satan. There are no such boundaries drawn round the empire of the wicked one, as to prevent him from assailing the subjects of Jehovah, or his people and instruments from mingling with, and tempting and disturbing, the people of God. Temporary departure from the paths of righteousness, sinful conformity to the world, and a lamentable degree of worldly mindedness, with the anguish of heart that accompanies or follows them in a person habitually devoted to God, are some of the bitter fruits of this intercourse. The loyal subjects and children of God easily and naturally associate when circumstances permit; and they mutually derive much light, and encouragement, and comfort from each other. But, alas! the wisest, and holiest, and most affectionate of Christian friends, have defects, and infirmities, and sins, which impede the progress, affect the temper, and interrupt the peace of those whom they love in the Lord. And while these evils are pressing on the senses, the child of God is " walking by faith and not by sight," is serving an unseen God, who, in wisdom and mercy sometimes withdraws or withholds the enjoyment

of his favour and approbation. How different the society into which the blessed spirit is admitted on being set free from its mouldering prison-house of clay! An innumerable company of angels take charge of it, and convey it into the circle of the redeemed and purified by the blood of the Lamb that surrounds the throne of the eternal; there it sees "God in Christ face to face, and is changed into the same image." God in Christ presides, in majesty and grace, over this glorious society,—the lowest of its members are kings and priests unto God,—the highest orders of created beings are its ministers of love. Have not the happiest in their Christian society on earth good reason to say, "I would rather depart and be with Christ, which is far better?"

4*th*, The day of this one's death is better, in respect of sufferings, than the day of his birth. Being born of a woman, his days here must be few and full of trouble. And many are the additional troubles which afflict the just. The afflictions of some are so great as to induce the spectator to say, "Wherefore I praised the dead, which are already dead, more than the living which are alive." The grave often appears a desirable refuge from the calamities of life, and excites to implore God, "O, that thou wouldst hide me in the grave!" Nay, the most painful manner of dying seems preferable to living under insupportable evils: "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life." Even

the pleasantest life has much bitterness of soul in it, much of which the world knoweth not; the most prosperous has many anxious cares and troubles; and the most healthful bodies undergo sufferings that render death desirable. From the actual suffering of these afflictions, or from the probability of suffering them, the righteous escape when removed from this life. Separated from the spirit as the poor harassed body is, it is still "united to Christ;" though laid in the dismal grave, "it resteth" there undisturbed by all the evils that make creation groan, and, forgetful of those that filled itself with anguish, "and brought it to the dust of death,"— "it resteth" there in the peaceful hope of a blessed resurrection, when it "shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body." And for the happiness of that day, the spirit waits in that state, "where God wipes away all tears from the eyes" of the inhabitants; where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

5th, The day of this one's death is better, in respect of the end of all the labours of life, than the day of his birth, on which they began. Did we listen only to the wailings for even "the dead who die in the Lord," which ascend from the earth, we would be led to think them the objects of singular compassion; but there is a voice from heaven which leads to a very different conclusion, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." He who thus pro-

nounceth them to be blessed condescends to assign the reasons or ingredients of this happiness; and the first is, "they rest from all their labours." They cease entirely from those toils which the nature of our bodies and our circumstances on earth render necessary. The unavailing toils of the indigent, the anxious and wearisome industry of the diligent in business, and the fatiguing preparations of the opulent to satisfy the demands of appetite, will have no place. " They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." They " shall be equal to angels," not only in respect of corporeal wants and their consequent labours, but also in respect of the care with which they shall perform their mental operations. Some of the most toilsome of our mental labours here are wholly excluded from heaven—there the painful labour of faith shall end in sight; the difficult labour of hope shall end in the enjoyment of its objects. And when " we become like the angels who excel in" intellectual " strength," with what care shall we collect knowledge, reason on our facts and principles, and form judgments clear and satisfactory! The second ingredient in the happiness of the dead who die in the Lord is, the reward of their past works of faith and labours of love received by them— " their works do follow them." As faithful hired servants, they finished the work God gave them to do; the toil and the heat of the day are followed by a refreshing repose resembling that of the night; they are made rulers over many things, and they

enter into the joys of their Lord, " who is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love."

6th, The day of this one's death is better, in respect of the degree of spiritual exercises and enjoyments, than the day of his birth. The enjoyment of God is the chief happiness of man, the glorifying of God is the chief exercise of man, without which he cannot enjoy him,—and both constitute the chief end of man. This exercise and enjoyment, which form the peculiar honour and felicity of our nature, so far from being coeval with our birth, are often not begun for years after we are capable of them, and sometimes not till the latest period of life. But even when the children of God have not the affliction to look back and see many years spent in the active service of self, which is the service of sin and Satan—when they can look back to the beginnings of their rational existence, and perceive that God hath, in peculiar mercy, separated them to himself from their earliest years; they also perceive that " their days have been few and full of evil"—of moral more even than of natural evil. They see imperfection and sin in all their services, and particularly in religious worship. How often has it been omitted, or shortened, or rendered formal and distracted, by the world, and its cares, its joys, or its sorrows! How hath conscious sin rendered it the mutterings of terror, or the importunity of flattering lips presented by a selfish slave! And what darkness and languor of affection characterize the

more spiritual and successful attempts to draw near to God! Should we wonder that delight in God, and the shining of his countenance, should be the distinguished privileges of a few seasons—that they should be followed by hidings of God's face, rebukes in anger, and chastisements in hot displeasure? And ought we not to prefer to the day of birth, which only leads to these imperfect services and enjoyments, the day of death, which brings them to an end, when that which was in part is done away, and that which is perfect is come—when the dead in the Lord are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them, and "the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," especially all that flow on account of imperfect spiritual service and enjoyments?

Say, is not the day of such a one's death better than the day of his birth, in respect of the state of the soul, the place into which it hath entered, the society it hath joined, the sufferings from which it hath been freed, the labours from which it hath ceased, and the perfection of its present spiritual exercises and enjoyments? Whatever opposition the heart may make, the judgment cannot hesitate even on the day which recalls not only the birth but all the subsequent days of life with their most endearing circumstances. With these views open-

ing up before us, we may mourn and not murmur; but our mourning will have more respect to ourselves than to "the dead in the Lord." Is not each of them from amid these glories saying to their mourning relatives on earth, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I have come to my Father in heaven?"

1*st*, This subject commends the gospel as very precious to us. The gospel alone teacheth us how to improve both the day of birth and the day of death with much comfort. It teacheth us to moderate the joys of a birthday. Gratitude to God, love to the individual born that day, and the pious desire of promoting domestic and social affections, call for the sober observance of the birthdays of kindred; but the birthday of Pharaoh and Herod ought to guard against imminent dangers, to which an irreligious observation of them exposeth. I have remarked on birthday occasions some humbling thoughts, some melting sensations, some painful apprehensions in the breast of the Christian parent, watering with tears of affection the sacred pledge of conjugal love. But the gospel presents a sweet and powerful antidote to these troubles in the ordinance of baptism, which the believer takes hold of, and pleads for himself and his offspring as the sacred pledge of the saving virtue of the blood and spirit of Christ, with all the benefits of a kind Providence. Alas! my child derives from me sin and infirmity, and has entered into the valley of weeping: but in the new covenant there

is treasured up for infants, as well as for their believing parent, mercy and grace suited to their need, as baptism signifies and seals; therefore will I mourn over the corruption and mortality of our fallen nature, and contemplate the dim prospects of changeful life with Christian faith and Christian hope. By the same gospel are we taught to restrain sorrow within due bounds at death, and to improve that event which often threatens to deprive surviving friends of reason or power to act, according to its plain dictates. While we bitterly and clamorously lament over our newly departed as dead, the great author and finisher of our faith sayeth unto us, "Why make ye this ado and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth!" Does dark uncertainty about the nature and duration of this repose, and about the life and state which follow awakening from it, weaken our hopes and strengthen our sorrows? the great depositary of his master's will addresseth us, in particular, saying, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Without the gospel the mirth of a birthday would be the mirth of folly; and the sorrow of the day of death would be the sorrow of despair.

2d, Without the cordial belief of the gospel, we cannot derive either improvement or comfort from

it on any of these interesting occasions. Unless parents are believers, what comfort can they derive from it at the birth of their children? If they are not believers, they have no interest in the covenant of grace; if they are not in covenant with God in Christ, they have no title to the seals or the benefits of the new covenant; and if they have none for themselves, they can have none for their children. It is to believers it is said, "the promise is to you and to your seed, even to as many as God shall call." Nothing can be more daring, more absurd, than for a person who has not faith to claim for himself and his offspring that to which he hath no right, and to build hope on this unfounded claim. It would be far less unreasonable to lay claim to an estate clearly willed to another, and to bring up a family in the groundless expectation. And yet I fear this is no uncommon case. Would ye parents avoid drawing down a curse instead of the blessing ye vainly expect, let me entreat you to "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, to prove your ownselves." Unless both parents and children be believers, what consolation does the gospel furnish the one at the death of the other? "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." And will a survivor persuade himself that the departed is happy, though God says, "his wrath abideth on him?" Or, how wretched must he feel himself to be though

he thinks, and thinks rightly, that the deceased is happy, while as an unbeliever he feels himself miserable, for ever separated from what on earth he dearly loved! Nothing can prevent this misery at the hour of separation but faith in Jesus Christ. Let us all, parents and children, be persuaded to receive, and rest on, and apply to Jesus Christ, "as our prophet to instruct us, by his word and spirit, in the will of God for our salvation," as our priest to satisfy divine justice for our sins, reconcile us to God by his blood, and as our king to rule in us and over us, that we may be conformed to his own image.

3d, The right use of a birthday and of the day of the death of one dear to us, will enable us to form some just judgment of our Christian character, while it exerciseth Christian graces, and ensures Christian comfort. Do we receive our children from God with gratitude and humility, and devote them to him to be saved in the way of his appointment, and to be disposed of as shall seem good to his providence, with faith and hope? At their death, do we vindicate his righteousness, while we surrender them to his sovereign demand, and bless him with tears for the hopes of the gospel? May we not infer with thankfulness to distinguishing grace, that the Holy Spirit hath in some measure changed us into the likeness of the children of God? If he give us more grace, we shall perceive the resemblance, notwithstanding its lamented defects;

we shall perceive that we possess some portion of his spirit, whom God pronounced to be "sincere and upright before him," fearing him and eschewing evil, and who, under accumulated and aggravated losses, said, "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." In these exercises, faith and self-denial, hope and trust in God, are tried and strengthened. Without these trials, we ourselves would not have known either the certainty of their existence, or the measure of their power—knowledge of great importance to our peace, and gratitude, and perseverance. Nor is the exercise of these graces less calculated to improve their vigour, and our skill in the use of them in time coming, than the exercise of any art is to improve our vigour and dexterity in the future practice of it. And all this is connected with suitable comfort. It is the will of God expressed in his word, and manifested in the nature of things, that strong consolation should be linked with strong faith, lively hope, and profound resignation, which are so honourable to God. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace," saith Isaiah to God, "whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee"—and, therefore, adds he, with equal concern for the glory of God and the good of his people, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

4th, Let us habitually desire another and better country than this, that is, an heavenly country.

This was the temper of the father of the faithful, and it must be the temper of all who are his children in deed and in truth. When we look around us in this land of shadows and of deaths, are we not convinced that it is our interest as well as our duty to say, "I would not live alway?" And yet, when we look into our hearts and into our pursuits, is it not too apparent to be denied that we are inclined to live—nay, that we are actually living as if we were to live here alway? We may behave ourselves as the lords of this domain, as if we were never to be dispossessed: but such conduct would only render us more despicable in the eyes of divine wisdom, especially as we boast of our reason—such conduct would only provoke God to crush our mock royalty with derision, and aggravate the wretchedness of our unexpected and merited fall. Let us compare our entrance into the world with our manner of leaving it; let us compare our privileges with our improvements, our mercies with our chastisement: and do not all convince us, that here we are in a school of discipline for a higher sphere of action and enjoyment, here we have no lasting place of abode, here we are pilgrims and strangers; and that it is our high privilege and our bliss, that "there is a city which hath foundation, of which the builder and maker is God?" Let us "desire" this country as our peaceful and happy home; let us "look" for it with the expectation of the promised habitation; and let us "seek" for it in the way of

faith and holiness, the way marked out by God; and with the holy diligence becoming those who travel in the royal way, which infallibly leadeth into the new heavens and the new earth, " wherein dwelleth righteousness." It is " while we look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal, that we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward is renewed day by day."

5th, Let us seek the consolation of the text for our friends and relatives who will survive us. It is not the odour of a name, which the world will universally admire and commemorate, that I would excite you and myself to seek; this disgrace has been purchased at great expense by some of the greatest poisoners of society, by some of the greatest scourges of the human race. It is not for the purpose of feeding a pitiful vainglory, I that would excite you and myself to seek the name in the text. Vainglory and that name have nothing in common, and that name may command the applause of the world, but can never engage its affectionate regard. What is the name that will prove more precious than ointment to our surviving friends, that will be more sweet and refreshing to their spirits ready to fail them, through the shock of our removal from them, than the most reviving and costly perfumes? It must be founded in its conformity to the requirements of God in his word, it must commend itself to the understanding and the heart of the children of God;

and be an evidence of meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, while it engages others to tread in the steps by which it is attained. And how is this name to be acquired, and by what costly sacrifices is it to be purchased? By what arduous undertakings and dear-bought victories can it be obtained? Simply by walking in love, "as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." This "is lovely and of good report;" now abideth faith, hope, and charity or love; but the greatest of these is charity, or love. "Love never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away."

SERMON XIX.

Is. lxi. 1.—"The Lord hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted."

THE flesh of man is liable to be wounded, and his bones to be broken. The pain of these is severe; and precious is the help of him whom God enables to practise the healing art with success. But are wounds, or bruises, or broken bones, to be compared with a broken heart? "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear." Prov. xviii. 14. Hath God endowed a physician with skill to heal this most dangerous of all diseases? Where shall we find him? What must we do to gain access to him? Have we wealth sufficient to secure his aid? Blessed be God, there is a physician who comes to inform us of his qualifications, and to offer the benefit of his skill, without money, and without price. "The Lord hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted."

I purpose, 1*st*, To make some explanatory observations on this gracious mission from the Lord; 2*d*, To invite the broken-hearted to accept the aid of the appointed physician, coming to bind them up; and, 3*d*, To conclude with some practical inferences. And may the Lord be revealed in the

exercise of his healing power in the experience of many this day.

I. To understand the text, we must attend, 1*st*, To the subjects of this binding up, the broken-hearted; 2*d*, To the person who is to apply this effectual remedy,—namely, to him who speaks these words; and, 3*d*, To the Author of the commission given him to exercise this healing power, "The Lord hath sent me."

1*st*, The subjects of this binding up are "the broken-hearted." The heart means here the seat of the affections. Broken signifies something that is forcibly separated, as a bone, Ex. xii. 46; or a potter's vessel, Lev. vi. 28. The heart, by a figure of speech, is said to be broken, when it is, as it were, bruised, wounded, cut asunder by the crushing weight or piercing sharpness of grief. "My heart within me is broken,—because of the Lord, and the word of his holiness; for the land is full of adulterers, for because of swearing the land mourneth." Jer. xxiii. 9, 10. "The broken-hearted" are those who are grieved, quite dispirited, and discouraged by sin and its evils, crushing and piercing the heart, and who are deeply humbled and truly penitent for their transgressions and pollution. This was the temper of David, rending his heart before God for the matter of Uriah and his wife, when in faith he said, "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Ps. li. 17. And this is the import of broken-hearted in the text, where it is connected and classed with "mourners" and "the spirit of heaviness," the objects of divine compassion, v. 3. Take the following characters of the broken-hearted, that you may compare yourselves with them, and determine your state and your right to the consolation of the text. The broken-hearted grieve for sin, chiefly because it is committed against God. David was far from being insensible of the evils his sin brought on himself and his neighbours, when he exclaimed, "O God, against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Ps. li. 4. The sight of the glory and grace of God produceth in penitent sinners self-loathing, and a thorough aversion from all sin, and endeavours after all holiness. Observe this effect of enlarged discoveries of the divine glory in Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The desire of healing, Ps. li. 8; a conviction of the utter inability of a creature to heal, Lam. ii. 13, with some hope in the mercy of God, experienced by many humbled sinners, excites to apply to God for healing: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." Hos. vi. 1. And this brokenness of heart is effected not by natural pain, or remorse, or fear, but by the Spirit of God influencing the different powers of the mind engaged in

considering personal sin. It is he who fixes the attention on sin, unveils its evils, enables the soul to apprehend them, and the heart to be duly affected, or broken by them; according to that promise, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh,"—a tender heart like Josiah's, who humbled himself, and did weep before God when he heard the words which he spake against Jerusalem. Ezek. xxxvi. 26; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27.

The remedy to be applied to hearts thus broken, is "binding up." This figure is borrowed from surgery, in which the flesh separated by a cut is united, or a bone broken is knit by means of being bound up. Ezek. xxxiv. 4. Here, binding up is put for the complete cure, agreeably to the same promise, less figuratively expressed. Speaking of the same heavenly Physician, the Psalmist saith, "he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds," *i. e.* by binding up their wounds. Ps. cxlvii. 3. The promise to them is not more express than complete, "The Lord is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Ps. xxxiv. 18.

2d, Let us attend next to the person who is to apply this effectual remedy, namely, to him who utters the words of the text. The person who utters these words, is the same person who speaks in the preceding chapter, and in the following verses of this chapter,—there is no change of speakers. In

the former, he styles himself "the Lord, on whom the isles shall wait," Is. lx. 9; and "the Lord, who will hasten this event in his time," ver. 22. And in this chapter he distinguisheth himself from "the Lord, who sent him, and from the Spirit of the Lord, that is upon him," Is. lxi. 1; and he styles himself "the Lord," who will rejoice in the Lord, ver. 8; and will be joyful in the God of his salvation, "who hath clothed him with the garments of salvation, and covered him with the robes of righteousness," ver. 10. This, then, is "the Lord," the second person of the Godhead, the Son of God, one with the Lord the Father and the Lord the Spirit. This prophecy, uttered many years before the fulfilment, anticipates the actual appearance of this glorious person to execute the gracious offices assigned him. And Jesus of Nazareth, hundreds of years after, applied this prophecy to himself, and so verified his claim, that some of his hearers immediately acknowledged the validity of it. Luke iv. 21, 22. From all this, it is evident that Jesus of Nazareth, God manifest in the flesh, is the person who comes to bind up the broken-hearted. And is he not just such a physician as they need? He hath ability and wisdom to bind them up; for he is "the mighty God." Is. ix. 6. He is affectionately disposed to effect their cure; for "he hath loved them, and given himself to the death of the cross for them." Gal. ii. 20. His heart is filled with a compassion tender and active, as their condition

requires; for "he is touched with the feeling of their infirmities." Heb. iv. 15. Who can doubt the efficacy of the balm he hath provided, his own atoning blood, seeing "it cleanseth from all sin?" 1 John i. 7. And in what instance hath he failed in his extended practice for thousands of years, among hearts the most fearfully broken?

3d, Let us attend a little to the Author of the commission given him to exercise his healing power on the broken-hearted. The Author is "Jehovah;" "the Lord," or Jehovah "sent me," saith the Son of God, "to bind up the broken-hearted." Jehovah, the eternal I am, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, the living and the true, sent me,—even he who is offended with sin, who broke their hearts for sin, who hath a right to determine whether they shall be healed, and how they shall be healed. The Father, sustaining the character of Judge of all, destined him to this office, saying, "I, the Lord, have called thee in righteousness." Is. xlii. 6; the Son consented with cheerfulness, saying, "Lo, I come: I delight to do thy will, O my God." Ps. xl. 7, 8. That his human nature might be duly qualified for the high and holy offices, the holy Spirit condescended to form it, and to be poured out on him, without measure, as the oil of anointing. Acts x. 38. Thus prepared, the Father sent him to act in his name, and by his authority, even as he sent Moses. Num. xvi. 28. And, in the fulness of time, he ushered him into the world, exhibited an

outward token of his unction by the Spirit, proclaimed his commission, and sealed it with the broad seal of heaven. Mal. iii. 16, 17. John vi. 27; i. 41. Acts x. 36, 41. Is not binding up what ye need, O broken in heart? Is not Emmanuel able and willing to heal you with his own blood? And, has he not all the authority and power of heaven to come and execute this commission of mercy?

II. I proceed to invite the broken-hearted among you to accept the aid of this heavenly Physician coming to bind you up. The cases may vary in kind and in degree; some may seem more hopeful, some almost desperate. The number requiring attention may be considerable. No matter. He comes to each of you. He can attend to each of you, and of the ten thousand broken hearts throughout the world, without distraction, at the same moment; and he will apply a balsam of such virtue, that no spiritual wound or bruise, however deadly, shall be able to resist its healing power. That you may have a more thorough conviction of these things, and may more effectually apply them to the peculiarities of your several cases, I shall address you in a more particular manner.

1*st*, I invite you to accept the offered aid of Christ coming in the gospel, to bind up your hearts broken by these your first permanent convictions of sin. Formerly, you thought yourselves innocent or righteous by reason of your good hearts and good

works weighed against your bad ones; or your perception of sin was imperfect, and your sense of it either slight or passing. Now, your hearts are "pierced" by the law, laying open their corrupt spots and blemishes,—"bruised" by the terrors of the Lord, denouncing eternal wrath against you, —"broken" by the loving-kindness of the Lord, in Christ Jesus, so as to send forth some streams of godly sorrow,—"sick" unto self-loathing, and groaning under the filthiness and grievous bondage of sin,—"bowed down" into the dust, through despair of help from the whole creation,—and "fainting," through anxious, perhaps long watching for some intimation of mercy and grace from the offended majesty of heaven. If these are not broken hearts, then, what are broken hearts? Oh, that divine grace would multiply the number of them among us; and then the healing power and presence of the Saviour would not be so often proclaimed in vain,—in vain as to the salvation, but not as to the just condemnation, of negligent hearers! But to each of you Christ speaks as distinctly as if he named you,—"the Lord hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." Do ye not "know" that it is God manifest in the flesh who addresseth you? Do ye not "believe" his testimony, and the authority of his commission, including all the love, and all the power of Jehovah? And will ye not "commit" your broken hearts to him, that he may heal the wounds of conscience, and purge away the pollution

of sin with his own blood, which hath filled heaven with spiritual health? May the Holy Spirit persuade and enable you to intrust your broken hearts to the great Physician; and he will bind them, and in due season make them every whit whole!

2d, The Lord comes to bind up your hearts, believers, broken again with a cutting and bruising sense of the guilt and pollution of your sins. The Lord comes in the gospel to heal the broken-hearted; and have ye not received the offer of this blessing in the gospel—have ye not experienced at least the commencement of this healing, when, by his word and spirit, he applied to your broken heart the balm of Gilead, imparting some portion of the peace of God and of newness of life? Though Christ binds up he does not completely heal the broken heart at once; its wounds are often slowly purged, they sometimes fester and bleed afresh through corruption and a nearer approach to God, and sometimes the heart receives new wounds and bruises from the prevalence of sin. Sometimes the skill of the physician is suspected—more frequently the actual commencement of the cure is questioned—the first evils are again experienced, and embittered with all the aggravations of disappointed hopes and of unbelieving fears. In the sacrament of the Supper Christ comes anew, and with increasing evidence of his grace and all-sufficiency, to bind up the broken-hearted of his believing people. In this ordinance he exhibits the lively signs of his remedies,

and thus calls in sense to the aid of weak faith; he gives these signs as the pledges of his own faithfulness and love, and of the efficacy of his remedies; and through them he conveys that measure of ease, and healing, and strength, which he judges most suitable. Perhaps you cannot lift up so much as your eyes to heaven, from a sense of your loathsomeness as transgressors against redeeming love; perhaps you can only smite on your breasts, saying, "Lord, be merciful to us sinners," while your hearts pant as strongly for grace to sanctify as for mercy to pardon. And still it is your grief that you can grieve no more. In this ordinance Jesus seals to you a right to his broken body, in which he bore, and exhausted the curse, due to your sins, on the accursed tree, and by which he secured for you the promise of the Spirit, that he may sanctify, and strengthen, and comfort you, according to the time of your need. May the inward seal of the Spirit accompany the outward seal of the forgiveness of sin, of the destruction of the body of sin, and of the perfection of holiness in the fear of the Lord!

3d, Jesus comes to bind up your hearts, believers, broken by the afflictions of life, and aggravated by a sense of the weakness of faith and the strength of corruption. Your afflictions may be many, and great, and of long duration. You may be groaning under bodily pain; you may be experiencing the crushing evils of a great reverse of outward circumstances; you may be weeping for the sufferings or death of

friends; or you may be trembling at the prospect of your own departure into the invisible world. With your temporal you mingle spiritual sorrows. You mourn for sin, the cause of all suffering; you mourn over personal sins, the plague of your heart, your besetting sin, the sin that hath prevailed against you; and you lament the weakness, the deadness of your faith. But you seek comfort in seeking not only pardon but sanctification. In your esteem Christ is the righteousness and the strength of his people, and on him alone are your eyes fixed for this great salvation.

Hear how he speaks to you now. "The Lord hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted." Why, then, are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? These afflictions are not peculiar to you, but common to all the people of God in all ages. If they are a furnace, I sit as the refiner, conducting the whole process, and moderating and limiting the heat and duration. Think not these are demonstrations of God's anger against you, though they are against your sins. I, the well-beloved of God, sustained sufferings greater far than can be borne by all the elect of God. My sympathy should assure you, as my strength shall bear you up till the need be is past; and the peaceable fruits of righteousness shall more than compensate for your sowing, and waiting, and watching in tears. Meanwhile, accept the symbols of my broken body and shed blood, as the pledge of my faithfulness, the seal of my love, and the earnest of my grace.

Afflictions and sin may have displaced the former binding up; but with what a quick eye doth the great Physician discover your condition, with what a compassionate heart does he enter into your distresses, with what a soothing voice does he pour into your ear the sweet language of consolation, and with what a gentle and healing hand is he ready again to bind up your broken hearts!

4th, Jesus comes to heal you whose hearts are broken by the temptations of the wicked one. Satan is either pushing you on to commit sin, or he has prevailed with you to yield to some temptation known only to God and your own consciences, it may be; or all his activity is employed to retain you in captivity, by endeavouring one while to lull you asleep, another while to plunge you into despair. Awfully distressing situation! The miserable creature, suffering the successive strokes of the crushing wheel, lies on a bed of down compared with yours at times. It is his body which suffers, and that for a short time; but it is your soul that is bruised, broken, torn asunder, by an executioner skilled in torture, and studious to increase it by the prospect of continuance. Blessed be God, you are still by the way-side where Christ passeth, ye are still by the pool where he exerciseth his healing power. His grace is more than an overmatch for Satan's malignity, his wisdom for Satan's wiles, his might for Satan's most strenuous efforts, and his tenderness for Satan's most refined cruelty. And

he says unto you, " the Lord hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." Whence proceed your godly sorrow for sin, your desires of reconciliation with God through Christ, and your constant endeavours after new obedience, so inconsistent with Satan's principles, so subversive of Satan's kingdom,—whence proceed all these but from my Spirit, the author of every thing truly good in the heart of apostate man? As certainly as I have " spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," Col. ii. 15; as certainly as ye shall partake in faith of the memorials of my broken body and shed blood; so certainly " shall I bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Rom. xvi. 20.

III. I shall now conclude with some practical inferences.

1*st*, A heart in some measure broken is inseparable from a state of grace. The reason is, corruption remains to combat grace; and wherever this combat is, there must be brokenness of heart in some degree or other. This divine constitution is painful, but it is also gracious. Brokenness of heart both prepares to welcome Christ when he first approaches to bind up, and afterwards increases esteem and desire of him. By convincing more and more that it is an evil and bitter thing to depart from the living God, it establishes more and more in the way of God. This mixture of grace and corruption banishes

security, and mortifies pride. The weak are prevented from sinking into despondency, when they see the strongest occasionally afflicted with a broken heart; and the strong are thus prepared to sympathize with and comfort the weak. It daily reminds the broken in heart that he is a pilgrim and stranger in this valley of sin and sorrow, and quickens his longings after heaven, and reconciles him unto death. And what opportunities does it present for the most glorious displays of the Lord's grace and power in binding up the broken-hearted!

2d, This inseparable connexion of grace and broken-heartedness should greatly endear the great Physician. Ye ought to afflict your souls for sin, but to cleave more closely to Christ, remembering his office. A parent finds matter for the extraordinary exercise of his affection in the very diseases of his children, and the head, of interest in the injured members; and will not Christ, your physician, your parent, your head, find your broken heart an occasion of greater tenderness, and care, and active exertion? But Christ seems to me to exasperate and not to heal my broken heart, says some one. So did Joseph act towards his brethren; but was it not to prepare the way for the grander display of his compassion and generosity at a more seasonable time? So did the angel who wrestled with Jacob; but, was it not that he might furnish him with the honour of a victory, and enrich him with a copious and singular blessing? So did our Lord with the

woman of Canaan; but was it not to illustrate the grace of faith in her, and grant her more than her heart desired? Alas! my heart, I fear, is not sufficiently broken to entitle me to lay hold of these strong consolations, may be the complaint of another. Let me ask you, Do you love and practise sin, or condemn, and hate, and forsake it? Do ye disregard reconciliation with God, through Jesus Christ; or do ye desire and seek it, as your chief good; and lament that your desire is so feeble? Do ye renounce Christ as your Physician; or long and pray for his approach, and grieve that your wishes and prayers have so little of heavenly fervour? If the latter, I pray do not forfeit your right, your consolation!

3d, A broken heart is a ground of humility and diligence, and not a plea for negligence and presumption. A heart which none but Emmanuel can bind should humble the possessor,—the author of it having no power to cure it, and no claim of right on God to heal it. The compassion of the great Physician should excite our gratitude, and desire to comply with his design, instead of carelessness and negligence. And what room is there for indolent presumption, since his active zeal and power are exercised not on the confident, and secure, and inactive, but on the humble, the mourning, the diligent? Great reason have those to reckon their condition dangerous, whom the tenderness and healing power of Christ do not both afflict and quicken to

labour. Who, but the labouring and the heavy laden coming to Christ, in obedience to his command, and in confidence of his promise, shall enjoy the rest he hath prepared for his people?

4th, Let true Christians, enjoying spiritual health and comfort through the grace of the Lord, learn to commiserate the broken-hearted. Hath any thing overtaken them that is not common to Christian men; and should ye not treat them with the tenderness due to brethren under the heaviest affliction? Christ is pitying them, and coming to bind them up; and have ye the spirit of Christ, do ye belong to Christ, if ye do not cherish compassion for them, if ye do not show them all charitable indulgence, if ye do not endeavour to direct, and support, and strengthen them? If your hearts experience no active sympathy with their broken hearts, ye are ungrateful for health imparted to yourselves by the Lord,—or the Lord hath never bound up your hearts, because they never have been spiritually broken.

5th, It is the *whole* heart alone that is a subject of fearful concern. "Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief," Prov. xxviii. 14. The objects of a broken heart are things of eternal moment, things without which no son of man can escape everlasting misery: and yet does not the whole heart care for none of these things? Is not Christ able and willing to save the chief of sinners? but do not some refuse to put themselves into his hand, under

the pretext that Christ will not receive such grievous sinners? He has declared that he is the author of salvation to those only who obey him, and do not some sin on in hope that he will save them at last? The two-edged sword of God pierceth to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; and do not many harden their hearts so as to resist its penetrating operation? Whence, then, can the whole in heart derive a single well-founded scriptural consolation? There is no promise to those who resist the Spirit, but that he will withdraw his influences—none to unbelievers but the wrath of God—none to the impenitent but that they shall perish—none to the stout-hearted, "but I will punish the fruit of the stout-heart," saith the Lord, Is. x. 12. And is it not fearful then to fall into the hands of the living God,—a consuming fire?

6th, Are some saying, "how shall we escape this wrath, and acquire this temper which hath promises so gracious?" Mourn over the hardness of your heart; for there is a promise to them who mourn. Plead that God would fulfil his own promise, "and take the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh,"—and plead his own command to "inquire after" him for the accomplishment of his word. Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 37. Here you have the grace and faithfulness of God for the ground of your confidence, and an encouragement to prayer, and the use of all other means. In a dependence on these be diligent, and your hand will

make you rich according to your desire. Study the law of God "till the commandment come, and sin revive, and you die," Rom. vii. 9. Look to Christ pierced by your sins till your heart become soft, and you can lay hold on God's promise to the contrite in heart, Zech. xii. 10; Is. lxvi. 2, till you can rest in precious Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 7,—till your rejoicing be the testimony of a good conscience, 2 Cor. i. 12. Consider not these exercises as the effect of healing, or the price of healing; in them Christ meets his people and heals them. In them continue to seek till ye find, and to ask till ye receive; "for he that seeketh findeth, and he that asketh shall receive."

SERMON XX.

Col. iii. 17.—"And whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

THESE words are addressed by the apostle to "the saints and faithful brethren at Colosse." Having introduced this epistle in the language of conciliation and endearment, having firmly laid the grand foundations of Christianity as the basis of practice, having established the connexion between faith and holiness, he proceeds to raise on this foundation the beautiful superstructure of Christian morality. To prevent mistakes and pleas of ignorance on this last point, he not only mentions the heads, but descends to many particulars of Christian duty. In the text he gives the general qualifications of every portion of this service: "And whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." All that the Christian does should be done "unto God, even the Father,"—"in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in giving of thanks to the Father in the same name."

This rule is short and complete,—it is easily remembered and applied to the business of life,—and it is admirably fitted to convince the unthinking of sin when duly considered. Look at the upright wall, look at the neat dwelling-house, look at the finest specimens of architecture. What but the due application of the workman's simple rule has promoted all this regularity? What his rule is to the builder this text is to the Christian, constructing the spiritual building of God in his soul, according to the perfect design of the heavenly architect.

1*st*, It determines the end and measure of Christian duty, "Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all unto God even the Father." 2*d*, It determines the means of attaining this end with acceptance, "Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus;" and, 3*d*, It determines the temper with which all is thus to be done, "giving thanks" to the Father in the same name.

I. The text determines the end and measure of Christian duty. The end of Christian duty is God, even the Father. None but God can reasonably be the end of an accountable creature's actions. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is the living and true God, and, consequently, the object of Christian duty. Here the apostle commands to fix our eye on the Father, as the proper object of our service; because he is the first in action and name

in the Christian system, the fountain of all good, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Judge of all the earth. This general rule is not violated when particular services are directed to the Son, who is God, or to the Holy Ghost, who is God, one with the Father. But this is the general rule, from which we should not depart without scripture authority. The measure of Christian duty is, " whatsoever we do in word or in deed." This includes every action of body or mind. The apostle cannot intend to enjoin hypocrisy, to require all our outward actions for God, and leave the operations of the mind for any other object. The nature of God requires that we serve him in spirit. God himself expressly says, " give me thy heart" and all its operations. And it is impossible to intend the glory of God, in whatsoever we do in word and in deed, and not to intend it in every movement of the soul in which these originate,—it is impossible the streams should flow towards the hill of God if the fountain is turned away from it. But the apostle specifies words and deeds, because these are the natural indications of the disposition of our mind, and will be the outward evidence of our doing all things unto God. So inattentive are men to their words, so apt are they to use them occasionally contrary to their judgment of justice and propriety, so regardless are some of the consequences of these irregularities, and so important is the example of a conversation according to strict godliness, that the apostle

James saith, " If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

The sum of the apostolic rule is, whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all to God, as an evidence of all your thoughts, and desires, and purposes of heart, being also done unto him. Here it may be asked, what are we to understand by doing all things to God? It plainly implies, that you propose God, even the Father, as the end of all your actions of mind and body. This ye cannot do without designing to honour him supremely by them. Hence this same apostle says most explicitly, " Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Of the method of promoting his own glory, God must be the best and the only Judge; and since he has revealed to us his will on this head, we must aim at his glory in all we do, and we must do it according to his command. Were we to act otherwise, were we to pretend to lay down rules of worship or morality which are not in the Bible, we would take upon ourselves to judge and legislate for God, we would give the lie to our profession of doing all things unto him,—in truth, we would do all things to ourselves, and nothing to God but the solemn and dangerous mockery of hypocrisy.

" But is it possible to yield obedience to this apostolic rule?" God cannot be distinctly proposed as the object of each word and each action, much

less of each thought. Yet he may be distinctly proposed to ourselves in the following cases: We may and ought to think of the honour and will of God when we are tempted. It is not impossible to meet evil suggestions as they rise in the mind, much less to meet temptations to sinful words or actions, and to oppose them by the glory and the will of God. It is our duty, and we are inexcusable when we neglect, to resist all temptations to sin, or even temptations to cause others to grieve or offend, by doing things not evil in themselves. In all acts of worship we may think of the honour and the will of God respecting our exercise. And when we venture into the presence of God without these before us, and without the temper they inspire, we impose on men, we insult God, and injure our own soul. He who trieth the reins regardeth not bodily service, while the heart is far from him; he esteemeth it an abomination; he will not endure it without testifying his displeasure against it; and yet how often is he provoked by worship of this kind!

We can propose the honour and will of God distinctly to ourselves in all acts of importance. The reason is, we do not enter on them without some serious forethought which requires time. A Christian looks for no success in his plan and measures of life, or no true happiness in his success, but from the blessing of God; and the apostle reminds him that this blessing is not to be expected, unless he undertakes with a distinct reference to the honour of

God, and in strict conformity to his will. When we duly consider this, it enables us at once to discover the cause of marriage, of our companions and friends, of our trade or profession, of our place of residence, and of our place of worship itself, proving unprofitable to our souls—nay, proving snares to them,—they have been made without consulting either the glory of God, or his revealed will concerning them.

Once more, we can propose the honour and will of God as the habitual end and rule of all we think, and say, and do. This is what the convert proposes to himself in setting out in the Christian life; this is what he proposes every morning, and in every act of religion. How difficult soever it is at first, yet it becomes more pleasant and more easy by continual practice. With what difficulty does the learner to write draw his first stroke, then his letters, then clothe his thoughts in words, then spell, then write; but in time how easily does he perform all these without attending to any thing but his ideas. In like manner, the Christian at first mingles the thought of God with his ordinary business with difficulty, but by and by, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, it flows into all his ideas, and forms the life and pleasure of them all. As the poet sees every thing with the eye of a poet, and the worldly man does every thing in order to gratify his ruling passion, and the traveller takes every step towards the end of his journey without

distinctly considering the tendency of every act or step, so the improved Christian views God in all things, aims at promoting the honour and performing the service of God in all things, without consciousness accompanying each external or inward action.

These are the things enjoined by the apostle when he says, "Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all to God, even the Father." What he requires is the demand of God by his Spirit dictating to him. We are bound to yield a ready and steady obedience to the sovereign authority of God. Our obedience should be the more prompt and affectionate, that we owe it no less to the goodness than to the authority of God. What can be more reasonable, more honourable, more pleasant, than for creatures to aim continually at doing the will and promoting the honour of their Creator! Is it not reasonable to devote every power, every possession, every moment to him who gave them? How ungrateful would it be to withhold any action of ours from him who created us at first for his service and glory, and whose workmanship we are, created in Christ Jesus unto these good works, after we had by our apostasy defeated the end of the former creation! Can a nobler end be proposed than infinite excellence adorning supreme authority? Is not this the end which the wisest of men, which the highest angels, which God proposes to himself in his sublimest works; and should not we be ambi-

tious of being admitted into this society, and of being reckoned fellow-labourers with them? Who would wilfully encounter the disgrace, and danger, and destruction inseparably connected with a want of conformity, a want of obedience, and want of gratitude to God Almighty? And who would not, for his own sake, for the sake of his fellow-men, propose the honour of God, as the end and the will of God, as the rule of all his actions, since it is the most effectual means of preserving him from sin, of rendering actions good in themselves virtuous, and of sanctifying even indifferent ones?

Is God the chief end, and his will the only rule of human action? then all who propose to themselves another end, and follow another rule, must be ungodly or profane persons. Ungodly they must be who aim at wealth, or power, or pleasure, as their principal object, and by laws which the world hath framed, and not God. What are they who serve God with their lips, and the world with their heart, but hypocrites,—but whited sepulchres, full of rottenness and dead men's bones? What are they who seem at times to do what they are doing unto God, but by and by evidently sacrifice to some unholy passion, some irregular appetite, but double-minded persons, who would serve God and mammon, but who hate him, however secretly, and will forsake him? And, alas! brethren, how much of profanity, and hypocrisy, and double-mindedness is to be found in the services of those who habi-

tually, and in spirit and truth, do all things in word and in deed to God, even the Father! This they contemplate with grief, and with unwearied endeavours to correct it; both of which acts are greatly promoted by the second benefit of the text, considered as the Christian's rule, namely,

II. It determines the means of doing all things to God, even the Father, with acceptance: "Do all," saith the apostle, "in the name of the Lord Jesus." Our duty as Christians riseth out of the name of the great Mediator between the Father and us. Let us attend a little to the interesting import of it. He is "the Lord." As one with the Father, he is Creator and Governor, or natural Lord of all things. As the Son of God and the Son of man in one person and two distinct natures, "he is the constituted Lord of all things, especially of the church. As her rightful Lord he subdueth, by his converting grace, his rebellious subjects to the obedience of the just. But he is "Jesus" as well as "Lord." He saves his converted people from all their sins. He saves them by his obedience unto death, from the guilt and punishment of all their sins, and secures the acceptance of their persons and services. He saves from ignorance, and from the love and practice of sin by his word and Spirit, and so enables them to serve God in spirit and truth, in righteousness and true holiness. This is, shortly, the import of his name. Now, we are commanded

to do all things to the Father in this name. This duty must imply the following things:

1*st*, We must do all things in obedience to his authority. In the service of God we must have reference to Christ, as his representative, legislating and judging in the church, and therefore entitled to our reverence and obedience. 2*d*, We must do all things to the Father in conformity to the injunctions of Christ. He alone can reveal the will of the Father, and he came in his name to make this revelation. Were we to neglect compliance with his command, and because it is his command, as well as that of the Father, we would neglect the only infallible rule of duty, and we would reject the will of the Father in rejecting or treating with negligence that of the Son. 3*d*, We must do all to the Father in dependence on the spiritual aid of the Holy Ghost, as dispensed by Christ. It is not enough to renounce all confidence in our own wisdom or strength, to know, and will, and do the commandments of God, and to rely on the help of the Spirit of God; it is necessary, still farther, that we trust in and apply for the influences of the ever-blessed Spirit, as bestowed by Jesus Christ. In him is treasured up all the fulness of God, all the influences of the Holy Ghost; "in him is the residue of the Spirit" for the benefit of his people; and he hath also promised to communicate these to them, trusting in him, and applying for them. 4*th*, We must do all things to the Father in reliance on the

sacrifice and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. Would we have the curse due to our sins removed, and a sense of it communicated; would we have our persons and services accepted as righteous by a just God; would we enjoy communion with a holy God; how can this be done (if the Scriptures be the word of God) but through the blood of sprinkling, presented by Christ as High Priest, in the Holy of holies? *5th*, We must do all things to the Father with a view to the glory of Christ. Whether we consider the person, the commission, the work, or the blessings acquired and dispensed by Christ, we must see reason for aiming at his glory, as well as the glory of the Father. It is the will of the Father that we should honour the Son even as we honour the Father. "When every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord, it shall be to the glory of God the Father." What then is it to withhold the glory due to the united, divine, and human natures of the Mediator,—the glory of his being with the Father the supreme end of human action, but to withhold the glory of the Father and of the Son?

What can be more suitable, more full of comfort, than this precept, "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," to all who are suitably alive to their actual character and condition as children of Adam? Without this atonement of infinite value, how could you come with all your guilt on your head into the presence of your Judge? Without the aids of the

Holy Spirit, how could ye have attempted to serve God with any hopes of success? Without the perfect obedience of Jesus, what room could ye have to hope that God will receive the still imperfect and unworthy though sincere services of a heart not yet made perfect in holiness? And unless all these blessings, so necessary to your holiness and happiness, had been lodged with a Mediator, who is man to pity you, and God Almighty to render them effectual to your salvation, how could ye conceive a ground of confidence at all suited to your corruption, infirmities, and guilt? If this means of doing all things unto the Father is so admirably adapted to our afflicting circumstances, it is no less honourable to God, the author of it. It conveys the most fearful impressions of the divine justice, which exacteth such satisfaction for sin as the propitiation in the blood of Christ. It conveys the most reviving impressions of the sovereign love and mercy of God, through it pardoning the most criminal offences. It illustrates gloriously the power of God, rendering this means effectual to sanctify and save the chief of sinners. It exhibits, in the most encouraging light, the wisdom of God, which maintains his honour, which punishes sin, and saves the sinner. It demands the profoundest veneration for the holy and awful majesty of God, which is not to be approached by the purest saints in their purest services, but through a Mediator sprinkled with atoning blood.

Must all things done to the Father be also done

in the name of the Lord Jesus? What a variety of sharp reproofs does this minister to persons violating the prerogatives of the Lord Jesus! It is plain from the second chapter, that the apostle primarily intended to maintain here as there, that Jesus is the head of all principality, against those who taught to worship God through the mediation of angels. Now, if Christians are complete in Christ,—if men are beguiled of their reward by a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, how much more must they be beguiled of their reward by a voluntary humility and worshipping of saints! Angels deprecated, apostles deprecated, this mistaken regard for them, and this impious encroachment on the rights of the one Mediator between God and man. What then must we think of those who do violence to the judgment of saints and angels, and address to them adorations which they justly abhor, as unsuitable to them and derogatory to the honours of Jesus? Where have the Scriptures enjoined to do "all things," or any thing, in the name of any saint or angel? Does not the command to do all things to the Father, in the name of Christ, demonstrate that the Lord Jesus is God and man, as well as the only Mediator? For who but God could, without idolatry, be the end and the solicitor in the court of heaven of all the actions of all his people? Now, how grievous the error of those who deny the divinity of Christ! "They have not the Son," as he is revealed in the Scriptures, and, therefore, "they have

not the Father." On the other hand, how strangely unscriptural, inconsistent, and self-contradictory are those who profess to believe that the Lord Jesus, the Mediator appointed by the Father, is God; and yet presume to exalt mortal men to his rank of mediator, and consequently of deity! These are unscriptural views which ye do not entertain. But many of us habitually, and all of us occasionally, do encroach on the prerogatives of the Lord Jesus, by other and more subtle, and to us more dangerous, because less gross, impieties. As often as we trust in any degree in our own powers for the attainment of holiness, and in our own righteousness, or even in the general mercy of God for salvation, so often do we not "rest upon him alone for salvation,"—so often do we violate the divine command in the text, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

III. The text determines the temper in which all things are to be done to the Father, in the name of Christ, "giving thanks." Every act is to be done to the Father in the name of Christ. This is to be done throughout life, and this is to be done "in giving of thanks." Thankfulness is the temper of the Christian. "In every thing give thanks." This temper is to be maintained at all times, even the most afflicting: "giving thanks always for all things." And it is to be manifested in suitable expressions

of gratitude, statedly, occasionally, frequently—"abounding therein with thanksgiving." But this temper and these acts of thanksgiving are to be presented to the Father "by the Lord Jesus." The apostle Peter assigns the reason to the Christians of the dispersion: "Ye are an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Even the purest, the most spiritual, and heavenly sacrifices of a devout heart are of no savour, are of an evil savour, unless presented and perfumed by him, the angel of the covenant: "By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually,—that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name."

How ample the ground, how inexhaustible the themes of Christian thanksgiving to the Father by Christ! The Christian contemplates him as the overflowing source of all blessings, and pouring them out on a guilty world by Jesus Christ as the capacious channel of them; and by the same channel does he send back the notes of his praise, improving in sweetness and force of expression as they roll towards the throne of Deity. He gives thanks for the goodness of God, in endowing him with a reasonable nature, sparing his guilty race under a sentence of death, and crowning him, even when evil and unthankful, with the bounties of his kind providence. He gives thanks for that love from which originated the plan of justice and mercy to fallen man, 1 John iii. 1. He gives thanks for Jesus

Christ, the most amazing demonstration of love to sinners, the wonderful means of reconciliation and intercourse between God and his rebellious subjects, Luke ii. 14. He gives thanks to God for interesting him in Jesus Christ, for qualifying him to do all things unto the Father by Jesus Christ, and for accepting and even rewarding him for such services, 1 Pet. ii. 9. He gives thanks to God for rendering the services required, and the means of performing them by Jesus Christ, pleasant to a taste once thoroughly corrupt, improving to a renewed but not perfected creature, and preparatory for the nobler exercises and enjoyments of heaven, Col. i. 12. He gives thanks to God, even the Father, by the Lord Jesus Christ, for marvellously bringing glory out of the moral darkness, for bringing holiness and bliss out of the moral transgression and wretchedness man had by sin introduced into the world, Rom. v. 15—17.

I can only suggest the heads of the Christian's thanksgiving as he doeth all things to the Father by Christ through life. Life would not illustrate the subject; eternity will be unequal to it; the tongues of glorified spirits and of angels will come infinitely short of its excellence and sublimity. But I trust not a few are inclined to adopt the language of the grateful apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." I trust many form the resolution of the

Psalmist, "while I live I will praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God, while I have any being."

How precious is this text! Let us all examine ourselves by it. I have seen it convince the deistical, who imagined they had served their Maker suitably, of ungodliness,—the Christian in name only, of formality,—those resting in the good things of a prosperous life, of unthankfulness to the Father of mercies,—and on the bed of death awaken a desire of that salvation from sin as well as from misery, which the Lord Jesus alone can give.

Let us all examine ourselves by the text. I have seen it clear up the doubts of the fearful Christian as to his state, lift up the head of those bowed down, and fill the mouth of the sorrowful with heart-cheering thanksgiving.

Let us all examine ourselves by this text. I have seen it show the Christian the defects of devotedness to God, of faith in Christ Jesus, and of gratitude for innumerable and precious blessings; and humble, and quicken, and invigorate, to prosecute the perfection of holiness.

Let us all carry the text about with us as our rule of life, and carefully apply it to our thoughts, and words, and actions. Let us never rest till our end is undeniably God, till our means of living to God is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and till our prevailing temper is thankfulness.

SERMON XXI.

JOHN xvi. 15.—" He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."

IN these words of our Lord addressed to his disciples he sets forth the respective offices of the three persons in the Godhead in the economy of grace. " The things of Christ," which he calls " mine," are the truths of the new covenant, essential to salvation, of which he is the substance, treasure, and dispenser,—they are also " the things of the Father," not excluding the Son and the Spirit of one essence, with whom they originated, and according to the counsel of whose will they are made known and executed,—" of these things," the Holy Spirit shall receive or take such as are agreed on in the council of peace, " and show them" to the disciples. He comes from the council of peace as its grand accredited agent; his message to the objects of divine love is an exact report of the will of the Father and the Son, as well as his own; and is made to them with an efficacy that is effectual to the end for which it is appointed: " He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath

are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."

Several of our Lord's promises to his disciples evidently refer to each of the three characters of apostles, teachers of the gospel, and true Christians, which they sustained,—consequently, the meaning of them will differ as do the characters to which they apply. Thus, when he says to them, "Lo, I am with you alway, to the end of the world," we must understand that our Lord was with them in a sense peculiar to themselves as inspired apostles, in another sense peculiar to them and all qualified ministers of the gospel, and in a third peculiar to them and to all who believe in Jesus, to the salvation of their souls. In the same manner would I apply the promise in the text. To them as apostles the Holy Spirit "showed the things of Christ" suited to the occasion, whether they were recorded in the Scripture, or had been told them by their Lord, or then existed only in the mind of God, and were necessary to complete the intended revelation of his will: he showed them at once and in such a manner that instantly they comprehended, believed, and wrote them with divine accuracy. To them as representing the ordinary ministers of the gospel, who were to succeed them in their office of constituted dispensers of the word and ordinances, the Holy Spirit so "showed the things of Christ," when they diligently employed their talents in investigating and declaring the mind of God, in a de-

pendence on his grace, that they fulfilled the duties of their office with wisdom and faithfulness. And to them as representing all who believe in Christ, to the saving of their souls, the Holy Spirit "showed the things of Christ" in a manner common to them and to all the faithful; and which I shall attempt to explain and improve in the remaining part of this discourse. And when we consider ourselves, as well as the disciples, addressed by our Lord in these words, with what interest, with what delight should we meditate on their import, fraught with blessing to every soul who desires to know "the true God and life eternal," "the spirit of truth the comforter will receive of mine, and show it unto you!"

I purpose to speak, 1*st*, Of the things of Christ; 2*d*, Of the gracious office which our Lord promises that the Holy Spirit will perform in regard to these things for the people of God,—he will "show them unto them;" 3*d*, Of the evidences and benefits of this office when performed by the Holy Spirit; and, 4*th*, Of the improvement of this subject that hearers of different descriptions should endeavour to make.

I. In enumerating "the things of Christ," I shall confine myself to those most commonly employed by the Holy Spirit to begin or carry on the work of salvation. Of these the

1*st* is, His original glory and gracious undertaking in the character of their surety to save the ob-

jects of sovereign love among the apostate race of Adam. Jesus "had a glory with the Father before the world was," John xvii. 5. Then "he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God," Phil. ii. 6. "Being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," is it not most reasonable that his Father should say, "Let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 3, 6,—is it not most reasonable that David, in the spirit, should call him Lord, though according to the flesh he was his descendant? Matt. xxii. 42—45. And what is more evident than that this "equal with God" graciously undertook, in the character of their surety, to save the objects of sovereign love among the apostate race of Adam? That "in Adam all sinned," and in him became liable to the death, which is the counterpart of eternal life, is among the most obvious and important truths of the Bible, 1 Cor. xv. 22; Rom. vi. 23. But does not the apostle inform us, that God hath chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to holiness, adoption, and heavenly happiness, all of Adam's race whom he shall bless with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus? Eph. i. 3, 4. Hath he not given him "as a covenant to the people," Is. xlix. 8, in his eternal purpose and in his revealed will? And hath not the Son of God said, in the counsels of heaven, and in the sacred record, in reference to this very appointment, "I delight to do thy will, O my God?" Ps. xl. 6—8. Glorious and gracious trans-

action, providing for the manifestation of all the excellencies of God in sweetest harmony, and for the salvation of myriads of perishing sinners! In prosecution of this plan, we find him,

2d, Assuming the human into union with his divine nature so as to constitute one person. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself, likewise, took part of the same," Heb. ii. 14—16. Hence, he has two natures in one person, and is called Emmanuel, God with us," Matt. i. 23; and "God manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. This is a thing pertaining to Christ essential to the scheme of salvation. "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," saith the beloved disciple, "is not of God," 1 John iv. 3. He is man to acquire the relation of kinsman, and the right of redemption in terms of his suretyship,—to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,—to yield obedience to the precept, and satisfaction to the penalty of the law, in the nature that violated the first and is subject to the last; and he is God to impart an infinite worth to his obedience and his sacrifice, and to complete the salvation of his people in the execution of his offices. Of the things of Christ the

3d Is the perfect righteousness of his human nature, of his obedience to the precept, and of his satisfaction to the penalty of the law. According to the prediction of the angel to his virgin mother, "the Holy Ghost came upon her, and the power of

the Highest overshadowed her, and he that was born of her was holy, and called the Son of God," Luke i. 35. Thus, his human nature was pure as the nature of Adam, when he came from the hand of God; nor did it contract spot, but remained unsullied while he sojourned on earth. "He was made under the law," Gal. iv. 4; "he had the law within his heart," Ps. xl. 8; "he fulfilled all righteousness," Matt. iii. 17; and was in all respects "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," as became him who is at once the priest and the sacrifice of his people, Heb. vii. 26. And his sacrifice for sin was no less perfect than his obedience. The wages of his people's sin is death eternal; but "God laid on him the iniquities of them all," Is. liii. 6; "and he bare our sins in his own body on the tree," 1 Pet. ii. 24; "he poured his soul unto death, and made his grave with the wicked," Is. liii. 12, 9; and on the third day rose again, according to the Scriptures: hence, the apostle Peter infers that his sacrifice is perfect, and the redemption complete; "for Christ hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit," 1 Pet. iii. 18,—and the apostle Paul asserts "that he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. Thus his people's debt of obedience and suffering is paid, and provision made for their reconciliation with

God, and their taking possession of eternal life. Among the things of Christ is in the

4th, His entrance into the holy of holies as the high priest of his people's salvation, and his consequent installation in the government of the church and the world. "As the high priest of the Jews alone went into the second tabernacle once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people; so Christ, being come a high priest of good things to come, by his own blood, entered in once into the heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us, having obtained eternal redemption for us," Heb. ix. 7, 12, 24. On Christ's appearance in heaven the Father said, in testimony of his approbation of the conditions of the covenant being fulfilled on the part of his Son, and in order to the fulfilment of his own part of it, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek,"—"sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool," Ps. cx. 1. Thus "God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church," Eph. i. 22; thus "hath he exalted him to be a prince and Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sin," Acts v. 31; and now is "he able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25.

5th, His coming in glory to judge the world, and accomplish the great plan of salvation, and resign

the mediatorial empire into the hand of the Father, is among the things of Christ demanding attention. "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all men in that he hath raised him from the dead," Acts xvii. 31. At the last day, "the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit on the throne of his glory," Matt. xxv. 31, 32. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. v. 10. According to his righteous sentence, "the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal," Matt. xxv. 46. And, when he hath completed the great scheme of saving his people, and punishing his enemies, then "shall he deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father," 1 Cor. xv. 24,—then shall he resign that empire over all worlds, which he held as Mediator, while he for ever retains a peculiar empire over the redeemed, and as one with the Father and the Spirit will preside over the universe with imperial sway.

6th, Of the things of Christ, the last I shall mention is, the free and full offer which he makes of all the blessings of salvation to all who will cordially apply to him for them. Pardon of sin, restoration to the favour and image of God, and an

inheritance in heaven, with the Holy Spirit to interest the sinner in the author and finisher of them, are the chief blessings of the gospel. These blessings are often signified by water in the Scriptures, on account of the painful and perishing state of mankind, and their enlivening, and refreshing, and invigorating nature; and Christ who hath purchased them, and is intrusted by the covenant with the distribution of them, is made known to us as the dispenser of them. And what can be more full and free than the offers of them which Christ makes to all who will cordially apply to him for them? "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price," Is. lv. 1. This invitation includes all, of every kind, of every degree, who are sinful, wretched, and helpless; so that to what person soever who will not apply to him for salvation, he may well say, "ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," John v. 40. Perish they must who will not comply with the invitation; but their blood is on their own head.

What saith the natural man seriously considering these truths. Must I believe these things of Christ, and apply to him for salvation, or perish for ever? What obscurity wraps them round! How can I reconcile them? What a mortification of the understanding, and of the heart, is inseparable from the reception of them! But, if they are the truths

of God's word, believe them I ought, and believe them I must, or I must perish. If these be the truths of God's word, there must be a beauty, an excellency to which I am insensible. O, wretched man that I am, who will free me from the darkness that surrounds me, who will unveil the glory that belongs to them? This is the work of God alone, who framed this scheme of truths, and the soul which is to receive them; but will he condescend to undertake and complete this labour of wisdom and love?

II. Yes, our Lord promises that "the Spirit of truth, the comforter," will perform this gracious office for the people of God,—"he will receive of mine, and will show it unto you." How shall we speak of the manner of the Spirit instructing in "the things of Christ," without degrading the subject, even while we limit our views by the scripture account of it? Yet the following observations, I hope, are fitted to increase our reverence and gratitude to the Holy Spirit, while they communicate a lively impression of the nature and importance of his work. This office of the Spirit implies,

1*st*, That he takes the most suitable of the things of Christ when about to show them. His eye ever follows the steps of the objects of sovereign love, he is well acquainted with their character and heart. When the season fit for this operation arrives, he selects that truth from among the things

of Christ intrusted to him by the council of peace, which is suited to their character, frame of mind, and circumstances. To this the experience of every believer in every step of his conversion, and in every step of his progress in faith, and holiness, and comfort, bears a decisive testimony,—exciting an admiring gratitude. Ignorance of this is the fruit of insensibility and carelessness.

2d, The Holy Spirit brings near the things of Christ, which he hath taken from the divine treasury as fit for his occasion. Sometimes he brings it near, unexpectedly, perhaps in a sermon, or in a conversation, or a prayer, or a psalm, or a hymn. Sometimes he makes idleness, a want of amusement, or the duties of the Sabbath, or the afflictions of life, more frequently a cause of opening and consulting the word of God. Sometimes he placeth the Scriptures within the reach of some needy soul, destitute of them, by the hand of a friend of Jesus and of souls. Sometimes he recalls to the mind of one who has not improved an early religious education, the chosen truth, and fixes it like a nail in a sure place, by means of some striking circumstance or event.

3d, The Holy Spirit parts the clouds, and removes the veil that surrounds the things of Christ. All professing Christians know, that the veil of Moses—the veil of types, and figures, and carnal ordinances, remaineth on the heart of the Jewish nation, even until now; and that the Spirit of the

Lord shall, at the appointed time, which we trust is fast approaching, finally take it away, 2 Cor. iii. 14—18. Professing Christians know, that there is a veil on the hearts of the heathen, of Mohammedans, of infidels, and of antichrist; and that the Holy Spirit will take it away from many of them. But it is of far more consequence to us, that we should remember there is a no less ruinous and far more criminal veil on the hearts of multitudes of professing Christians, even the veil of pride and prejudice, of formality and lust; and that, as the Lord is pleased to continue with us the means of grace, so the Spirit will take them away from not a few, as he hath done in times past.

4th, The Holy Spirit will shine on the things of Christ. A picture in darkness, however near, cannot be seen at all, and in an unfavourable light cannot be justly estimated. From these disadvantages, destructive of their influence, will the Spirit of truth free these precious portraits of the divine wisdom and mercy to perishing sinners. Having brought them near, and placed them in the most advantageous position in respect of us, he shines on them in the order and in the degree that he chooseth, and which always is the best. In his enlightening beams, they at last stand forth in the clearness of substantial forms, in the distinctness of individuality, in the harmony of intimate union, sweet consistency, and mutual co-operation, and in the glory of a scheme effectual to promote the honour of God

and the salvation of his people. This often is the consequence of time, of varied and painful experience.

5th, The Holy Spirit will effectually cure the eye of the understanding, naturally blind to the things of Christ. Man "is blind" in this respect; "he is alienated from the life of God, because of the blindness of his heart," Eph. iv. 18. In vain are the things of Christ brought near us, in vain are the mists that conceal them dispersed, in vain does the Spirit of God shine upon them placed in the most favourable position, if we stand opposite and direct towards them our sightless eyeballs. All their glory and excellency are lost upon us; to us they are as if they were not. And, alas, how many members of every Christian congregation exhibit a spectacle ten thousand times more moving, more heart-rending than blind persons standing before the most interesting pictures! And if the operator, who removes the cataract from the blind eyes and lets in all the glories of the visible world, is precious,—Oh, how inestimable the Holy Spirit, "who opens the eyes" of the spiritually blind, that "they may know what is the hope of the Father of glory's calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints!" Eph. i. 18.

6*th*, The Spirit fixes the eye of the mind stedfastly on the things of Christ which he sets before them. Spiritual sight would avail a man nothing if his eyes were only glancing at divine things, and

habitually roving on things seen and temporal, or dwelling on any one of that class of objects. Alas, how many and strong are the temptations to this abuse, and how frequently and mournfully successful are they! No sooner are the eyes beginning to open on spiritual things, and the strength of their peculiar impressions to be manifested in the life and conversation, than pride, and vanity, and worldly interest, and Satan, and friends, the emissaries of Satan, present objects of sense, to weaken the impression, to distract the attention, and to bring back spiritual blindness. And we have seen them prevail,—we have seen their unhappy object hurried into the heated pursuit of something earthly, or involved in a round of mere worldly, not to say sensual enjoyments, to such a degree, and for such a length of time, that spiritual feeling and spiritual sight began to decay, and spiritual friends to sigh and pray in sorrow for them. Occasionally, too, an impatience under the gradual illumination of the Spirit, an ambitious aspiring after knowledge not attainable, have riveted the attention of the inquirers on things that lead them to neglect and undervalue the very lesson the Spirit would teach. Against these and similar temptations the Spirit warns them under his tuition, and, if they have unhappily yielded to them, he by degrees delivers them, under a course of salutary discipline. Weary of all other objects of pursuit, their language is, "We would see Jesus;" conscious of their inability to guard against this distraction

of mind, their prayer is, " Unite my heart that I may fear the Lord; and, having attained the object of their wish by the grace of the Spirit, their grateful acknowledgment is, " O Lord, my heart is fixed."

7th, The Holy Spirit opens the hearts of his pupils to receive the things of Christ with admiring gratitude. " The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 14; because he hath gone to take his rest with the objects of his earthly affections, he will not rise to open and receive the heavenly message, Luke xi. 7. Though treated once and again in this unworthy manner, Jesus still saith, " Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me," Rev. iii. 20. When the set time is come, the Spirit openeth the heart, as he did that of Lydia, not only to attend to, but to comply with the things spoken, Acts xvi. 14, 15. Then the language of the soul, " persuaded and enabled by the Holy Ghost" to embrace Jesus, " is, Lift up your heads ye gates, be lifted up ye everlasting doors" of my heart, " and the King of glory shall come in"—" come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" and when he hath embraced him in the arms of faith, his language is, " Lord, mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people," Luke ii. 29—31.

" How mysterious soever the things of Christ, how inveterate soever the objections of the corrupt heart

to them, this manner of teaching them must be effectual. The teacher is almighty, his manner of instruction is rational and powerful, and the result must be the great end proposed by the cordial reception of Jesus and the things pertaining to salvation. The things of Jesus have been long before me; often have I heard them by the hearing of the ear. My heart is not insensible to their excellency. My life hath certainly felt something of their power. O, that I knew whether they have been shown me of the Spirit!"

III. When I shall have stated some of the decisive evidences and benefits of this promised office of the Holy Spirit, you will be somewhat assisted in judging whether he hath shown you the things of Christ.

1*st*, Those to whom the Spirit of truth hath shown the things of Christ have a clear apprehension of their reality, an irresistible conviction of their excellency, and an interesting persuasion of their importance to themselves. "Do ye, then, with open face, behold the glory of the Lord as in a glass?" 2 Cor. iii. 18. "Hath God shined into your hearts to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, as it shineth in the face of Jesus?" 2 Cor. iv. 6. And can ye say in truth, "there is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved?" Acts iv. 12.

2*d*, Those to whom the Holy Spirit hath shown

the things of Christ have experienced a deep prostration of soul, upheld by a secret hope and a lively desire of profiting by the gracious discovery. Have ye received the Spirit of grace and supplication, and seen Emmanuel pierced by your sins, and mourned with a peculiar depth and bitterness of grief? Zech. xii. 10. Beholding the majesty and grace of God, in the face of Jesus crucified, have ye abhorred yourselves, and repented in dust and ashes? Job xlii. 5, 6. And are ye, "through the Spirit, waiting for the hope of righteousness through faith?" Gal. v. 5.

3d, Those to whom the Holy Spirit hath shown the things of Christ have such an impression of their fitness and beauty, as produceth a frame of heart that correspondeth with these qualities. "All we, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Lord, the Spirit," saith Paul, in the name of himself and fellow Christians, in whom the Spirit beareth witness with their Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Have ye such an impression of the fitness of the things of Christ to secure your happiness, that it produceth in you heartfelt gratitude to God their author? Have you such an impression of their fitness to illustrate the glory of God, as to produce in you high esteem of them? Have you such an impression of the gracious design of them to change you into the image of the Lord, as to produce in you a desire of this change, and a belief that it is

attainable? Rom. viii. 29, 13, 14; 1 Cor. xv. 49. Have you been struggling to put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which is created after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness? Eph. iv. 22—24, Col. iii. 10. And are you "adding to your faith, knowledge, and virtue, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly-kindness, and charity? for if these things be in you, and abound," they shall make you that ye "shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

4th, Those to whom the Lord the Spirit hath shown the things of Christ experience a sensible increase of spiritual life, of spiritual strength, and of needful comfort. In contemplating the things of Christ, have your hearts felt a quickening power, O ye who complained of their deadness? In contemplating the things of Christ, has your strength for duty, for temptation, for trial been renewed, O ye who mourned over your weakness in all these respects? Is. xl. 31. In contemplating the things of Christ, have ye received strong consolation for the sorrows of guilt, or sin, or loss, or death, O ye who were bowed down all the day long, and watered your couch every night with tears, because of these things?

5th, Those to whom the Spirit hath shown the things of Christ, enjoy an increasing delight in attending on religious ordinances, and in performing

the prescribed duties of life in which the Spirit most commonly exerciseth this gracious office. Have your views of the things of Christ led you to say of them as contained in the Scriptures, "more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb," Ps. xix. 10,—to say of your devotions in a secret place, "surely the Lord is in this place,—this is none other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven," Gen. xxviii. 16, 17,—to say of worship, when a family or two or three Christians meet together in the name of the Lord, of a truth "Jesus hath been in the midst of us,"—to say of the house of prayer, there have we seen the power and the glory of God, and exclaimed, "how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!"—to say of the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper, "this is the communion of the body, this is the communion of the blood of Christ,"—and to say, when in Providence deprived of public ordinances, "my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord?" In a word, have your views of the things of Christ led you to say of the most common, the most humble, the most painful duties of your stations, because required by your Lord, "it is my meat and my drink to do the will of my Father in heaven?"

6*th*, Those to whom the Spirit hath shown the things of Christ, entertain a growing desire to partake more fully of their benefits when the glory of

them shall be fully revealed, and their own capacities be enlarged and perfected. Have ye tasted in the ordinances that the Lord is gracious; and do ye not long to drink of the rivers of pleasure that are in his immediate presence, and impart a fulness of joy? Ps. xvi. 11. In them have ye enjoyed the communion of saints on earth; and do ye not desire to "come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born that are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant?" Heb. xii. 22, 24. In them have ye seen Jesus darkly, as through a glass; and is it not your prayer that ye may see him as he is, that ye may be like him, and be satisfied with his likeness,—nay, may not some of you be saying, "I would rather depart, and be with Christ, which is far better?" Ps. xvii. 15; Phil. i. 23. Have ye joined fellow Christians here below in celebrating the praises of your Redeemer, whose power and grace ye have experienced; and do ye not often realize the period when ye shall associate with the redeemed around the throne, and without a doubt or a fear with the fulness of confidence and joy shout aloud with them, "Unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever?" Rev. i. 5, 6.

I have not pretended to enumerate all the effects of the Spirit showing the things of Christ; I have mentioned those only that are essential to salvation; I have not described the highest measures of these effects. Some have been transported, as into the third heavens, in the enjoyment of them. This forms an exception to the ordinary procedure of the Spirit; this does not meet the experience of the generality of Christians; and, incautiously exhibited, afflicts the most tender hearts in an injurious manner. And it is to be remembered, that the impression made by the discoveries of the Spirit will be, in general, according to the capacity and diligence of the observer,—and according to the sovereign pleasure of the Lord the Spirit. Sometimes the impression will be more, sometimes less; sometimes very effectual, when scarcely or not at all perceived, as when afflicting humiliation is not acknowledged to be an evidence of spiritual manifestation. All the effects mentioned may not be produced at the same time, though something of all accompanies each saving impression. Sometimes one of these effects, sometimes another, is more remarkable. And this variety is not capricious and arbitrary; it is owing to the wisdom and grace of the Holy Spirit, affectionately accommodating his lesson to the present state and circumstances of his disciples, or to their approaching duties and temptations.

1*st*, As those who have walked in light, and are

now walking in darkness in regard to "the things of Christ," are the objects of our Lord's peculiar and compassionate regard, I address myself to them first of all. Your views of Christ and his work which were once bright are now faint, which were once distinct are now confused, and you no longer experience their cheering influences. You begin to suspect that your past enjoyments in contemplating the things of Christ were a delusion. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning this fiery trial as though some strange thing happened unto you," 1 Pet. iv. 12. "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man," in a state of reconciliation; "but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way for you to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God," Is. l. 10. Expostulate with your unbelieving hearts, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God," Ps. xlii. 11. In answer to all your temptations, say, "I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the

house of Jacob, and I will look for him," Is. viii. 17. Thus, ancient believers in darkness " looked unto him, and were lightened," Ps. xxxiv. 5.

2d, You who have obtained some saving practical discoveries of the things of Christ, demand our attention in the next place. It may be, that by means of a religious education, you have known something about them, and never questioned the statements made concerning them,—from your infancy it may be that they have produced some occasional emotions of joy or sorrow, but without any permanent or sanctifying influence. Now you perceive something more of reality, of excellency, and of suitableness, to a felt need of a powerful divine remedy. Your case resembles that of the blind man in the gospel, whom Christ enabled to see with a perfect eyesight, by the power of the Holy Ghost. After our Lord had put his hands upon him the first time, he asked him, " if he saw aught," and he looked up, and said, " I see men as trees walking;" and it was not until he had put his hands upon him a second time that " he saw every man clearly." " Despise not the day of small things." Trust in him, with thankfulness for having done so much for you, that he will perform the good work he hath begun; wait patiently in the use of means, till he put his hands upon you a second and a third time if your case require it, and you will see every thing of Christ clearly. " Unto you that fear my name," is the Lord saying unto you,

" shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings," Mal. iv. 2.

3d, Are there not some of you, my friends, who can say to the ever-blessed Spirit, concerning the things of Christ, " in thy light do we see light." " Who hath made you to differ from others,"—who are involved in a second darkness,—who see imperfectly and unsatisfactorily,—or who are absolutely blind? O, how precious this gift of sovereign grace! By it ye are continuing to be changed more and more into the image of God; by it ye perceive the work of the Spirit in your heart and life; by it ye are enabled to say to God, " thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time the corn and wine of the men of the world increased." Consider what ye were, and what ye may become through pride, and security, and sloth, and wilful sin; and are not humility, and watchfulness, and holy diligence your incumbent duties, as well as present thankfulness? Carry about with you the word of God, that light of your feet, and that lamp to your path. In the sacrament of the Supper, feed on that flesh which is meat indeed, and that blood which is drink indeed, that your strength may be renewed for the walk of faith, in the light of the Lord. And with the unwearied importunity of children under the pressure of hunger, apply to your Father in heaven for grace suited to your time of need. " Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and unto you it shall be

opened,—for if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him," Matt. vii. 7, 11.

4th, I cannot conclude without a parting word to those who are careless of Christ, and the office of the Spirit, described in the text. Ye are careless of Christ; ye seldom think of him, but perhaps to blaspheme his name; ye imagine his favour, if necessary, may be had at any price, and at any time you please to ask it; you live as if Christ never had existed. And is this treatment worthy of the Son of God in our nature, who died and descended into the grave, and is now exalted to the government of the world, to save you from sin and hell? Ye may neglect learning, and pleasure, and riches, and power, and life itself, and be saved; but if ye neglect Christ, ye must perish miserably and for ever. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" And why are ye careless of Christ? Chiefly because ye are careless of the Holy Spirit. None but the Holy Spirit can make saving discoveries of the things of Christ to the soul of corrupt, apostate man. None but He who created the soul of man can renew him in the spirit of his mind. None but He who hath received the things of Christ, from the Father and the Son, can show them unto the renewed soul with saving and comforting power. One man may discover the invention of another, and reap all the advantages of it, without the assistance of the

first inventor; but no man can discover the counsels of heaven, the knowledge of which is essential to eternal life, save he who is appointed in the unchangeable purposes of the Godhead to reveal them in the soul of man,—even the Holy Ghost. This is the method of communicating saving knowledge fixed by the unalterable decree of heaven. And who are ye, O men, that ye should be careless of it? If ye are careless of the inward effectual teaching of the Holy Ghost, is it not because ye are ignorant of his office? All of you know something about the love of the Father, and the atoning death of the Son; but it is lamentable, it is dreadful, that with the Bible, the catechism in their hands, with instruction in public and private, so many are ignorant, not only of the work of the Spirit in their own hearts, where it must be if they shall not perish, where they must perceive it if ever they shall enjoy the assurance of faith, but ignorant of it as taught by himself in the Scriptures. If ye are careless of the inward effectual teaching of the Holy Spirit, is it not because ye are self-confident,—confident of your penetration and unassisted efforts? Many are the books that contain the principles of every trade, art, or science, and yet ye uniformly learn the knowledge of these by the help of a proper teacher; and have ye the strange presumption to think that ye can learn "the things of Christ" essential to the art of living by faith on the Son of God, in order to a meetness for the exercises and enjoyments of heaven,

without the assistance of the only sufficient and appointed teacher of things pertaining to salvation? What is this wilful ignorance of the office of the Spirit—what is this contempt of his assistance, but a contempt of the unchangeable plan of heaven, a contempt of the love of the Father originating it, a contempt of the mediation of the Son maturing it, and a contempt of the person and office of the Holy Ghost executing it? And will this horrible audacity, at which the heavens and earth are astonished, at which angels weep, at which devils rejoice as far exceeding their own horrible audacity, escape an adequate and tremendous punishment? Impossible. Ruin, perdition, destruction inevitable, must follow the contempt of the Spirit's instruction. If you have a hope, is not that hope founded on the love of the Father and the sacrifice of the Son? But what will the love of the Father, what will the sacrifice of the Son avail you, unless you are instructed and interested in it by the Holy Spirit? Alas! the blood of Christ will cry not for your pardon but your condemnation; the love of the Father will be changed into fury, and his power, that would have been exerted to save, will be put forth to destroy you. Would ye escape this coming storm of indiguation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, instantly flee to Christ, and go to school to the Holy Spirit; and may the good Spirit lead you into the land of uprightness!

SERMON XXII.

Prov. iv. 18.—"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

"WHO are the just, and what is their path, of which glorious things are spoken by Solomon?" are questions very becoming us, when we reflect that there are but two ways in which mankind can travel, the one of which leads to eternal misery, and the other to everlasting happiness,—that we are travelling in one of these ways, that we are now another year's journey on our way, and that our path becomes interesting in proportion as we approach its awful termination.

"Who are the just?" He is just who renders to every one what is due. A just man does unto all men as he would reasonably have them do unto him in like circumstances. As we do not call him just, who, withholding nothing due to his equals and inferiors, is disloyal or traitorous to his sovereign; so he is not just who renders not to God, his supreme Lord, the glory that is due. Hence, a just man is devoted to the glory of God, he walks in his ordinances and commandments blameless, and performeth all his

duties to himself and to his fellow-men as unto God. A just man, in the largest scripture acceptation, is a righteous man in his dealings with God and men. But though his fellow-men pronounce him just, though he is governed by a principle of rectitude,—still what has become of his past injustice, and what becomes of the defect of absolute righteousness in all the operations of his faculties, in the influence of unjust principles, and in all his actions; how is he pronounced just before God, before whom no flesh living can be justified on the footing of personal righteousness? The Scriptures inform us, that he is justified by faith in Christ, whose obedience unto death atones for all his sin, and secures his acceptance with God; and that this faith is not only the means of justification, but of the love and practice of righteousness or universal holiness. Hence, a just man is just in his principles and conduct to God and man, and is accepted and treated by God as if he were perfectly just, on account of the perfect righteousness of Christ reckoned unto him. In vain do men look for righteousness from any other quarter, or in any other way. "Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by him;" and they come to God through him, who walk in the way of faith in him and of true holiness.

The practice of faith and true holiness is "the path of the just." It is fitly compared to a path or orbit, and he to the luminary that moves in it; it is

marked out for the just as the track in which they are to move without deviation; the direction is wisely chosen, and carried through regions not the nearest or most pleasant it may be, but the best for the traveller, and for those on whom his influence falls, and the best for illustrating the excellencies of "the Author and Finisher of his faith;" and it infallibly conducts to the desired, the greatest, and most glorious end—the glory of God, and the salvation of the soul.

Concerning "the path of the just"—*i. e.* the principles of those justified by faith in Christ reduced to practice,—Solomon elegantly affirms by the inspiration of God, that "it is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" and this affirmation is the subject of discourse. Here it is affirmed that the life of the just brightly reflects the perfections of its divine author,—that the morning of this life possesseth peculiar sweetness and interest; and that it acquires strength and splendour in its progress, and is eminently glorious in its perfect state.

I. The life of the just brightly reflects the perfections of its divine author—"it is as the shining light." The life of the just is bright with the lustre of saving knowledge. When Daniel would represent God as the source of knowledge, he says, "and the light dwelleth with him," Dan. ii. 22. Concerning those who are ignorant of the will of

God revealed for the salvation of men, Isaiah declares, " if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," viii. 20. The Ephesians, you know, " were saved by grace through faith"—they were just; in warning them against the insidious attempt of those who endeavoured to vindicate vice, the apostle reminds them of their great attainments in divine knowledge, as qualifying them to detect and expose the fallacy and avoid the snare of such sophistry, and leaving them without an excuse in yielding to it, saying, " Ye are light in the Lord." Thus the just shine with the knowledge of God and of his Christ, a knowledge which pervades and influences their whole nature, which constitutes a portion of their divinely-communicated essence, which renders them " children of the light." The life of the just is bright with the lustre of true holiness. Light is most pure, it is not liable to be polluted when shining on the filthiest objects; and hence it is the finest emblem of holiness, and of God who is most holy. " God is light," or purity itself, saith John, " and in him is no darkness at all." Unholy creatures, most dissimilar to God, are called darkness; evil spirits are " the powers of darkness," and wicked men " the children of darkness." On the other hand, creatures who resemble God in purity are invested with light as their attribute, the holy ministers before God's throne are " the angels of light," and the redeemed around the throne are " the saints in light." And

the just on earth are not only " called to be holy as God is holy," but " they are partakers of his divine nature," and their light so shineth before men, that the world, seeing their good works, " glorify their Father who is in heaven." The life of the just is bright with the lustre of divine joy. " Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness of heart for the upright." Here the Psalmist useth light and gladness of heart as terms of the same import, and represents them with great beauty, as prepared of God for his justified people. Light is the well-known cause of a sweet and lively pleasure, and may fitly signify its effect,—which effect, joy, eminently belongs to the just, and to none but them. Well may the guilty and condemned, even all the unrighteous, be said " to dwell in darkness, and to sit in the region and shadow of death," as " God is angry with them every day,"—" the wrath of God abideth on them," " as there remaineth nothing for them," in that state " but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation," as there is no solid peace to the wicked, and they are all their lifetime in " bondage through fear of death." Well may it be said of the just, that " upon them the light hath shined," since " they rejoice in Christ Jesus" as an all-sufficient Saviour, since " they rejoice before God as they who joy in harvest," since they are filled with peace and joy in believing, and clothed with the garment of praise. The life of the just is bright with the lustre of divine love. God is love,

and the sun, which is the source of light, and life, and joy in the material world, is the splendid emblem of his benignity; and, in testifying his peculiar regard to his people, he lifteth on them "the light of his countenance." Animated, they are also clothed, with the benignity of God; they do good to them that hate them; they love, with a pure heart fervently, those who love the Lord; according to their measure, they diffuse light, and life, and joy around them; "they walk in love," and "they shine as lights in the world." The life of the just is bright with the lustre of divine glory. A taper gives light, a star shines, but both are unseen in the blaze of the sun's light. Just so, the sweet beams of a happy temper and the agreeable polish of a good education are little lovely compared with the light of the just. In the life of the just there is none of the graces awanting; there is an inimitable perfection in each taken separately; and how different soever they are, they, like the several colours that constitute light, so sweetly and beautifully mingle as to produce a splendour, a glory unrivalled among men, which even unholy men feel and acknowledge while they vilify the subject. How can it be otherwise? "God dwells in light, full of glory," and in contemplating him they are changed into the same image of his glory. And this shining light of the life of the just is created. The mind of man, as he enters the world, is dark as the confused mass of the chaos in respect of this spiritual light; a similar motion of

the Spirit on it, a divine call to that which is not similar to that which said, "Let there be light," is necessary to its saving illumination. This is what the apostle most distinctly and unequivocally asserts. "God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it is in the face of Jesus." The will and exertions of man are not idle, while God is calling forth this heavenly light; but they no more produce it than they produce the light of the sun; they who depend on their own power, only "kindle a fire, and compass themselves about with sparks; for a time they walk in the light of their fire and in the sparks they have kindled," by and by "they sink down in the darkness of sorrow," Is. l. 11.

II. The morning of this life possesseth peculiar sweetness and interest. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more." This is the description of the morning light, of the gentler beauties of which the commencement of the spiritual light remarkably partakes. Both are faint in their first appearance. The first light of the morning is a little speck, scarcely discernible from the surrounding darkness, seeming to sink into it again; just so, for the most part, appears the light of the just, filling his own heart as well as the heart of Christian friends with painful uncertainty, with trembling hope. But though weak, it is light, and

the light of day. Let not the spectator undervalue but hail its emerging beam, and wait with the patience of hope. And who art thou in whom this change is in progress, that thou "shouldst despise the day of small things?" Is it not of sovereign grace that light is beginning to shine, and that the darkness of everlasting night hath not enclosed you for ever? The light of both the natural and spiritual morning is peculiarly sweet. By degrees "the morning cloud passeth away," the fragrance of opening flowers ariseth, the melody of morning song falleth on the ear, and her dewy light sheds beauty over the landscape; and is not this a picture of the prime of the spiritual day? How mildly cheering this light, succeeding a gloomy, tempestuous night, and gradually dawning over the whole soul; how tenderly interesting this light, still softened by the tears of pleasing grief, and beginning to assume the warm glow of animating hope! The light of both the natural and spiritual morning shines afterwards with the freshness and vigour of animated youth. The sun rises above the horizon in youthful majesty, and from a serene sky he pours his flood of golden light over the earth's remotest surface. And do we not here see the untroubled mind, the fresh affections, the glowing zeal of the young Christian, "as a bridegroom going forth from his chamber, and as a strong man rejoicing to run a race?" O, that his knowledge kept pace with his zeal, and his stedfastness with his fervour;

then would he not have reason to mourn his falling from his first love, nor the world, who should pity and love him, have room to scoff at his errors of head, and not of heart! And O, that the prime of religion were joined with the prime of life! My young friends, does God offer to invest you with his heavenly light as with a robe? and will ye refuse the celestial gift, will ye withhold from God what he requires,—your youth; will ye not seize the fittest season for beginning, for rendering your work easier, for avoiding a thousand snares, that you may look back and rejoice that almost your whole lives were devoted to God; will ye grudge that the graces of your early years should be doubly sweet and interesting, doubly vigorous and promising, through the grace of God poured on you as the light of the morning? Wait for it, more than they who watch for the morning; yea, let your souls thus wait on God for it.

III. The life of the just acquires strength and splendour in its progress, and becomes eminently glorious in its perfect state,—" it shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Like the sun, it is progressive. The just have become as little children, they are first babes in Christ, who are to become young men, who are to " come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This implies growth

in knowledge and faith, in love, and holiness, and comfort; growth promoted by feeding daily on the bread of life. Sometimes this progress is represented by moving forward in a course of increasing excellence; "they go from strength to strength," saith David. Temptation sometimes retards their progress, or obscures their lustre; sometimes they become weary and faint in their mind; but this is commonly when they relax in the diligent use of means; and this loss is repaired by more diligent waiting on God, by which "they renew their strength, run and are not weary, walk and are not faint; yea, mount up on wings as eagles." There are times when they seem to themselves, and perhaps to others, to diminish in splendour, and to stand still in their course, when in reality they are making the most certain progress in humility, meekness, resignation, and other graces that rather strike deep roots than send forth lofty branches. All of them habitually aspire to their portion of the Spirit, and emulate the example of Paul, saying, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," and they are habitually "adding to their faith, virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity." To do otherwise would be to counteract the purpose, neglect the promise, and abuse the supplies of God,—would be to contradict the profession of godliness, and renounce the hopes of the new covenant. Per-

fection in kind but not in degree is attained on being justified. Let not him who thinks that he shineth, glory as if he were already perfect; rather let him question the lawfulness of this boasting, and fear lest it should be the presage of disappointment and shame. Let all true Christians guard against the want of comfort, and the reproachful inquiry of others, "what do ye more than others?" Let them evidence their new creation in Christ Jesus, comply with their heavenly vocation, and avail themselves of their Lord's example and intercession by "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The life of the just, how luminous soever, is liable to be obscured. The sun is continually advancing to his meridian splendour, and yet he is sometimes covered with clouds, or even eclipsed. Something like this occurs in the Christian life. It is liable to be obscured by the superior splendour of others, to be invidiously darkened, to be enveloped in the thick clouds of sorrow, temporal or spiritual, and even of sin itself. Such is the day foretold by Zechariah awaiting the people of God; "and it shall come to pass in that day that the light shall not be clear or dark, but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night; but it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light." "The light of the just may be much obscured, yet shall not be wholly extinguished; their state may be much deformed, yet some holiness and consola-

tion shall be found." "Let him, therefore, who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall; see that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise; give all diligence to make your calling and election sure; and if you are now enveloped in a sorrowful cloud, which increases your cries for the supply of heavenly light as well as the dispersion of this darkness, be not utterly cast down; there hath no temptation overtaken you but what is common to men."

The life of the just shall terminate in heavenly glory. Consider how the faint speck of morning light terminates in the blaze of the meridian sun, "in perfect day;" even so shall ye shine, faithful followers of Jesus. So Jesus proceeded through his mortal course, marking out the track in which ye should tread, and entered into his glory, that he might prepare a place for you, and in due time say unto you, "well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." Like the sun shall ye descend into the darkness of death, with enlarged orbit, only like him to rise with renovated splendour, that in heaven ye may shine "as suns in the firmament." This is "the perfect day" in which perfection is attained, and no cloud obscures the scene, which was prepared from eternal ages, and shall be followed by no night. Fear not, ye who are just through faith in Christ, that this height of glory is unattainable by you; "ye shall proceed like the splendour of the sun, which no-

thing can extinguish, nothing can hinder in its course, till ye come to the highest pitch of holiness, joy, and glory." Before this can fail, the purpose of God must be reversed, the promise of God recalled, the blood of Christ enforcing his intercession set at nought, the work of the Spirit overturned, and the everlasting covenant be abolished.

Are ye illuminated and luminous with the light of that divine knowledge which constitutes you children of the day,—with the light of holiness in all manner of conversation,—with the light of divine love, diffusing temporal and spiritual good according to your measure throughout your sphere,—with the light of sacred joy, all of which compose a glory that encircles you and manifesteth your heavenly origin and end; are ye illuminated and luminous with this light? though but in its beginnings, "arise, shine, for your light is come." That you may so shine, let this be the chief object of your wishes when you lie down and when you rise up; beware of contentment with any attainments you may make; continually study to mortify sin, to strengthen what is weak, and to exercise what is strong in grace; cease not to implore an increase of grace suited to your need; and frequently inquire if your improvements keep pace with your privileges; in a word, "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you, and run with patience the race that is set before you." It is God who calls you and placeth you on this glorious

course; how then can ye fail? Will not wisdom's ways be ways of pleasantness; and are they not continually and for ever conducting you nearer God, the great model of excellence, and the inexhaustible fountain of glory and bliss? Be continually actuated by these motives, and "your light shall shine progressively, not wasting as that of a taper," nor declining as that of the setting sun, but increasing as that of the morning, until perfected in the knowledge, holiness, and felicity of heaven." And well may this prospect enable you to review the sorrows of the past year, of your past life, with the sweetest consolation, enable you to conduct your present conflicts with courage, to support your present trials with patience, and to look forward into inscrutable time with holy confidence that all shall terminate in glory, and honour, and praise.

Is there none among you sensible that he has no title to these prospects; none trembling that he moves in another path; none in trouble of soul that one year after another finds him in the same road, only nearer its dreadful termination; none exclaiming, "how shall I become just, that my last end may be like his?" I hope the Spirit is moving some one to put this question, and that he will carry home the answer to his heart with power,—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," and thou shalt be justified, thou shalt obtain an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith, and thy path shall be "as the shining light that shineth more and more unto

the perfect day." It is Jesus who lightens every man that cometh into this course; he is the Sun of righteousness, and he is the pattern and source of divine light to all who affectionately contemplate and apply to him as such; therefore, cry mightily, that ye may with open face behold the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Lord the Spirit.

SERMON XXIII.

Rev. i. 17, 18.—"And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

John was one of the two sons of Zebedee, the fisherman. Christ chose him in early life to be his disciple, and afterwards commissioned him to be one of his apostles: and he attached himself, with peculiar affection, to his Lord. John was a man of sublime genius and ardent temperament, which, after he was made clean by the truth, were consecrated to the service of his Master, not only in all the fervour of zeal, but in all the meekness of wisdom. He was admitted to the honourable familiarities of the beloved disciple, during the lifetime of Christ, and intrusted with the care of his mother at his death. To his pen are we indebted for that gospel which specially vindicates the divine glory of his Lord, and for those epistles that so eminently breathe the spirit of his Master, which is love. On account of his activity in promoting the kingdom of Christ, he, John, was banished to the Isle of Patmos, and compelled, it is said, to work in the mines. While the

Emperor of Rome made him descend into the bowels of the earth as a wretched criminal, the Lord of heaven and earth admits him to a glorious manifestation of himself, and honours him with the highest privileges of his favourites. On the Lord's day, the apostle "was in the Spirit,"—was under his ordinary sanctifying and extraordinary prophetical influences. In these circumstances he was favoured with the following awful and transporting vision of his Lord, as he exerciseth "all power in heaven and earth," ver. 12—16. So great was the change in his Lord, since he leaned on his bosom at the feast of love; nay, since he beheld him transfigured on Mount Tabor, that "he fell as dead" at his feet, overwhelmed by reverence for his majesty and holiness, swelling into distressful fear, through a painful sense of his own littleness and sinfulness. This fear is a most humiliating and distressful passion, swallowing up humble faith and trust, filling with trouble and torment, and suspending the rational faculties, so that the person becomes not only unfit for duty or enjoyment, but "as dead." This fear could have no room in a state of innocence; our first parents in Paradise, before the fall, were strangers to it; it belongs to a state of sin. Even a state of reconciliation is not wholly exempted from it, because not wholly exempted from sin. But the revelation of God's grace, of himself as the God of all grace and consolation, is calculated to deliver from its distressful and sinful attacks, which would drive away from

God, drive into desperate enmity to God, if it did not lay the sufferer at his feet "as dead." It is the peculiar office of the Lord to calm this tumult in the bosom of his people; and he delights in doing this by his commands, by reasons which he assigns, chiefly derived from his own person, offices, and love; and by his tender treatment of the afflicted, accompanied by the inward influences of his Spirit, which dispose and enable the heart to entertain them, and to profit by them. His treatment of the apostle "fallen at his feet as dead," will illustrate these observations; "and he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

These words direct our attention to the means which our Lord employs to remove the painful and overwhelming fears of the beloved disciple.

1*st*, The Lord employs condescension and kindness to remove the fear which afflicteth his disciples. "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not." This act, and these words of Christ, are well fitted to banish the sudden dread excited in w.ak human nature by the manifestation of the awful divine majesty. The memory of them is sweet to the apostle; and he records them in the renewed complacency which he felt when he first received them. "And he laid his right hand upon me." "He laid his hand on" the apostle to calm

his extreme terror by an act expressive of familiar kindness ; and he laid his right hand upon him, to convince him of his esteem, and to impart inward strength to him. Whenever Jesus toucheth his people, they derive virtue from him exactly suited to "the time of need." Daniel beareth witness to this pleasing truth. Favoured with a glorious vision of the Son of God before his incarnation, he too sunk under the weight of this glory, and thus describes the manner of his recovery ; "I was in a deep sleep, on my face toward the ground : but he touched me, and set me upright." For the same purpose and with the same effect he laid his right hand of friendly power upon John at this time. With his reviving senses and renewed strength he must have experienced a delight to which the recovering prophet was a stranger, a delight peculiar to the beloved disciple. He must, in this act, have recognised the right hand of his beloved Lord, whose touch had often diffused peace and joy through his bosom, and whose touch once before recalled his fainting spirit, overcome by the glories of Tabor. And how does all this help our conceptions of our Lord's manner of dealing with his people under the ordinary dispensations of his grace ! We have no prophetical visions of our Lord and his glory ; he reveals not himself to our senses, as in the days of his flesh ; but he sometimes manifesteth himself to our faith in his word, in his providence, or in his ordinances, in a manner that prostrates us at the feet of his ma-

jestic holiness. We see no image, we perceive no corporeal hand, we feel no sensible touch; but we are favoured with a returning tranquillity of soul, with a returning humble confidence in him, with a returning inclination and strength to listen to his sacred commands, which could flow from nothing but his condescending, his affectionate, and efficacious but imperceptible touch.

When he brings the minds of his humble followers into this posture, as he did that of John, he says unto them, as he said unto him, "Fear not." The touch speaks powerfully to the heart, but the language of it is undefined, is not quite precise: it may be interpreted to signify too much, or too little, and it is the testimony of one sense only. But, when Christ says "Fear not," he presents two witnesses to the same thing, he makes his meaning unequivocal; and what he encourages to by his touch, he commands by his words. Grace was imparted by his touch, and now he warrants, he authoritatively enjoins the exercise of it in dispelling fear. This is an injunction which the believer will not disobey in these circumstances. He may be lying motionless on the ground even after the gracious "touch;" he may not see the reasons of laying aside his fear; he may not have power to banish it; but he will attempt to stand up, and be courageous, by virtue of the Lord's command, like the poor paralytic person.

2d, To the mind thus prepared, the Lord pre-

senteth, as he did to John, a view of his own eternal supremacy. Then saith he, "I am the first and the last." These words imply that he to whom they belong as a title, is "before all things, and the end of all things," for which they are and were created, and by consequence the Creator, and Disposer, and Judge of all things. This title belongs to Him who is the sole and undisputed Lord of the universe; it belongs to supreme Deity alone. And we find God appropriating it to himself, and founding on his right to it his unrivalled supremacy and unlimited dominion. "Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts;" by the prophet Isaiah, "I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no god." And in terms more precise and energetic, God saith by the same prophet, "before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and besides me there is no saviour.—Yea, before the day was, I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?" If Jesus Christ had spoken these words to John, how could any, who acknowledge that he is "the faithful and true," deny him the honours of supreme Deity, and therefore of unity with the Father and Spirit? But Jesus Christ, speaking to John, has thrice solemnly assumed this title; and in this chapter, lest it should be perverted, he has connected it with explanations of its import so clear, so full, as to place his claim to supreme

Deity beyond a doubt, on any fair interpretation of his words. At the 8th verse you will find it thus written, " I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Lest there should be any mistake about the person who uttered these words, the Son of man, arrayed in divine majesty, repeats the sum and substance of them at the 11th verse with a voice as a trumpet, to pierce the most obdurate ears, " I am the first and the last, the beginning and the ending," not of the church, not of any one thing, but of all things, without limitation. And a third time, in this chapter, the royal High Priest of his church inculcates his right to this title in its fullest extent, saying, " Fear not; I am the first, and the last."

The belief of the supreme Deity is the foundation of all religion; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is " God over all, and blessed for ever and ever." It is, too, the cause of awful reverence, and of holy fear; " Lord God Almighty, who would not fear thee?" But the divine supremacy is also the only solid foundation of holy peace; " acquaint now yourself with God, and be at peace." Who but Almighty God can sustain creatures whose tendency is to sink into their original dust, can supply creatures who are composed of wants, can defend creatures who are not more feeble than improvident; who can satisfy creatures who have capacious and immortal souls, thirsting for corporeal and spiritual

happiness in time and in eternity? And if this almighty God be for us, who can be against us? If this God all-sufficient be our God, what can we want? If this everlasting God hath in sovereignty united us to himself, who can separate us? Surely, though heart and flesh should faint and fail, there can be no room for distressing fears, when God is the strength of the heart, and the portion for ever. Well, therefore, may our Lord command John and all his trembling followers to build their peace and tranquillity on the supremacy of God, saying, "Fear not; I am the first, and the last." Though this be the foundation of peace, it must be confessed that the first views of it tend to aggravate the fears of those not reconciled to God, conscious of their condition, and indeed of all whose consciences are burdened with guilt. Therefore, the Lord leads on to those considerations which are suited to allay terrors of this kind. Having presented a view of his own eternal supremacy,

3d, He fixeth the attention on the union of the divine nature, to which this belongs, with his human nature: "I am he that liveth, and was dead." The first of these affirmations belongs to the preceding verse, and may be read thus, "I am the first, and the last, and the living one." In this connexion Christ asserts, that he hath life in himself, and never ceaseth to have it, and that he giveth life to others. In this sense he elsewhere styles the Father "the living Father;" and here he declareth his own unity

with the Father in this essential property of the Godhead. This declaration he makes for the purpose of inculcating the no less mysterious and gladdening truth implied in the connexion betwixt this and the following clause—" I am the living One, and I was dead." How could the ever-living One die? Certainly not in respect of that existence of his which cannot suffer, and much less die. For this ever-living existence God prepared a body, which he assumed into union with itself, so that " the word which was God, and was with God, became flesh" without sin. It was this flesh, this human nature, which suffered and endured a separation of soul and body, while the ever-living remained united to both, and could say, " I was dead." The clear revelation of " the living one who was dead" is of great importance to the returning peace of John, and of every trembling follower of Jesus. John had an interest peculiar to himself, and another common to himself and all the faithful. The change his Lord had undergone since he beheld him on earth was so great, as probably to occasion anxious fears arising from doubts of his identity; but now the assertion that he is the same who died, together with the prints of the nails, honourable amid the splendours of his glory, convinced him that this is the same whom he so loved in the days of his flesh. John had proclaimed to the world, that his Lord is the word dwelling in flesh; and now he must

have rejoiced in his Lord's oral testimony to the inspiration of his spirit in him. Besides these, John had an interest common to all the faithful. The ever-living one in Christ, clearly apprehended, is to them a sure and delightful refuge from all the fears of natural religion, flowing from indistinct views of the perfections of God, from utter uncertainty as to the manner of worshipping and serving him, and from the inefficacy of the notions of God collected by reason, as well as from all the horrors of superstition that will represent God to herself, and no less dishonour him than degrade, and demoralize, and render miserable, her stupified votaries. God in Christ Jesus is the true representative of the Father to mankind; "He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" in his face is seen the glory of God, and that glory clearly seen changes the beholder into the same image. And as "he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," he is well entitled to the confidence due to our common nature and similar experience. In this union of deity with humanity, there are a condescension and a love which should command the boldness of humility, and engage the affiance of admiring gratitude. How can the believer express those sentiments excited in him by a lively perception of "the living one in him who was dead," in language more affectionate and forcible than that of Thomas proclaiming the triumphs

of faith over his late unbelief, "My Lord and my God?" The next ingredient in the Lord's remedy for the fears of his people consisteth in the

4th place, Of the reasons and evidence of his death being effectual to all the ends for which it was endured. "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive!" I, the living one, was dead as to my human nature; in dying I received the punishment of sin,—not of mine, for I am without sin, as my bitterest enemies are forced to confess, but of yours, O my disciple, for which I have atoned to divine justice, and which I have thus taken away, so that they shall never be charged to your account, as my present life and glory must convince you; therefore, banish the dread of wrath, which I have exhausted so far as my faithful followers are concerned; enjoy the peace of God which I purchased for you by dying, which I have bequeathed unto you in my testament duly sealed, and of which I now assure you, encompassed as I am with the glories of heavenly majesty.

How admirably is this fitted to allay and remove the most dreadful of all fears—namely, those connected with "a true sense of sin," as committed against the God of righteousness, as well as of goodness! "A wounded spirit, who can bear?" Who can bear the anguish and shame of unreasonable and ungrateful transgression, the apprehensions of eternal separation from God, and goodness, and bliss, unto excruciating never-ending wretchedness in the

society of the accursed, and the intolerable conviction of utter inability to deliver ourselves out of the hands of the Almighty, who seems already to manifest himself as a consuming fire! Let the Saviour say to the heart as he doth to the ear, "I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive;" and this great tempest of thy soul will be turned into a great and blissful calm, O thou who art ready to be swallowed up of despair! Christ laid down his life a ransom for many, even for as many as will be persuaded to trust in its availableness to their redemption. And with what show of reason can you distrust its efficacy? Is not the ransom of infinite value, being the death of "the living one?" and hath it not "glorified" the authority and honoured the justice of God more than it was possible for your sins to have affronted them? And is he who laid down his life a ransom for his people "alive from the dead," set free on the fulfilling of his engagement? then the price has been offered legally and legally accepted—then a discharge is ready and will be granted, with the liberty of the sons of God, to all who will sue for them in due form by faith in Christ before God seated on his throne of grace. "For Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by his own blood, hath entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much

more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The preciousness of this remedy against the fears of guilt is experienced by the believer not only at conversion, but as often as sin in himself is attended to, more especially as often as sin prevaileth against him, and at the hour of death when the sins of the whole life are reviewed. The beloved disciple himself saith, " If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." And he adds, for the encouragement of those penitently confessing their sins, in the language of deep personal interest, " If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." At this time John could not behold the glory of his Lord without self-abhorrence; and he could not hear these reasons and evidences of his death being effectual to all the ends for which it was endured from his own mouth, without " his spirit being revived." And the spirit of the humble and afflicted because of sin is revived by a refreshing persuasion of these truths; and will it not attempt the language of another apostle, who knew their power and sweetness incomparably, " Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died—yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also

maketh intercession for us?" Closely connected with this is

5th, The remedy against fear, prescribed by the Lord, namely, his own eternal priesthood solemnly affirmed. "Behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen!" "Behold, I am alive," a thing most wonderful in itself, seeing I was crucified, and dead, and buried; and "behold, I am alive for evermore," a thing no less certain than beneficial to thee and all my people. Christ engaged to redeem the people of God by making his soul an offering for sin; and God engaged that he should triumph over death and the grave, should see his seed, should prolong his days, and that the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand. Instructed in the covenant, believers in general, and especially John, who had witnessed the proofs of his resurrection while he was on earth, who saw him taken up into heaven, and who now sees him invested with badges of his royal priesthood as discharged in heaven, will "know that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; that death hath no more dominion over him." "Christ is alive for evermore," to enjoy the reward of his humiliation unto death, at the right hand of the majesty on high. "Christ is alive for evermore," to accomplish all the purposes of his death and resurrection unto glory, relating to his church and people: "he is able to save to the uttermost all those who come to God through him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

" Behold, then, Christ is alive for evermore," to communicate life to his people, and to preserve it; to maintain peace between them and God, once reconciled; to save them in the uttermost extremities of danger; to come and receive them to himself at death; to raise them up, and fashion their vile bodies like unto his own glorious body at the last day; and, finally, to introduce them into bliss, perfect and never-ending as his own. His own faithful word is the sure foundation of these hopes; his own life the inviolable pledge of their fulfilment; because I live, ye shall live also. And here, " behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen!" The simple meaning of amen is, so it surely is,—so it surely shall be,—so I surely desire it may be for ever. In the mouth of Christ, and spoken in reference to the consolatory truths which he had just uttered, amen is of high importance to the fearful disciple. Here, amen expresseth our Lord's own firm belief that his human nature shall live in personal union with Deity for evermore, in reference to the covenant in all things well ordered and sure; here, amen is a solemn affirmation of the nature of an oath in the mouth of God, that " he is Alpha and Omega, the living, who was dead, and is alive for evermore;" and here, amen is an expression of the strong and stedfast desire of the sincere and lively joy of his heart, relative to the certainty of all these glorious and gladdening truths. And what can be better adapted to subdue all the anxious and distressful

fears about spiritual life in those who sincerely covet this gift and blessing? Is Christ alive for evermore for the express purpose of communicating spiritual life; and why should any of you, applying to him with all the earnestness of perishing sinners, despair of obtaining what he himself teacheth to seek, that he may bestow it more abundantly? "Is Christ alive for evermore' for the express purpose of preserving, and cherishing, and perfecting the divine life which he has communicated; and should not the firm persuasion of this truth more than counterbalance all your fears of spiritual death threatened by inward corruption, by the designs of Satan, and by the temptations of the world? What doubts should outweigh the oath of the faithful and true witness,—of the Lord of glory? What fears of yours should outweigh the Lord's joy in his everlasting life for your benefit,—the joy which enabled him to endure the cross, and to despise the shame? Believers, "your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

6*th*, and lastly, Our Lord proposeth to the faith of his disciples his own absolute and peculiar authority over the visible and the invisible world, as an effectual remedy for their afflicting tears: "and I have the keys of hell and of death." The word translated hell does frequently signify in Scripture the place of future punishment, Matt. xvi. 18; but the literal interpretation of it is "the unseen;" and

in this sense it includes the region of separate spirits after death, whether inhabiting heaven or hell. In this sense the Greeks, from whom the sacred writers borrowed the word, most frequently employed it; and in this sense it is certainly employed by them. When Peter, quoting the 16th Psalm, says, in the name of Christ, " thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," we know that this means in paradise, where he promised that the penitent thief should be with him. Hades, therefore, means heaven, with all its mansions, and hell with all its dungeons. Death is the passage into hades; and Christ says he has the keys of both. Keys are the badges of delegated but absolute authority. This was promised to Christ, Is. xxii. 21, 22. Before ascending into heaven, he declared that it was then bestowed on him: " All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me." The descent of the Spirit, the fulfilment of several remarkable predictions, and the present declaration in these circumstances, substantiate his authority over the visible and the invisible worlds. Of a truth, " he hath the key of David; he openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth," in these his widely extended dominions. And is there a remaining fear in the bosom of those who look to him for salvation, which this unlimited authority of their Saviour is not fitted to subdue? He has the " keys of death," therefore he must have the supreme disposal of all things that affect life, and he must equally com-

mand the entrance into the grave, and the issues from it. Let your eyes be fixed on these keys, which are never turned to open or to shut here below, but for the good "of them that obey him;" and would not every anxious fear about any of the events of life, about the time, the circumstances, the manner of death, or about the resurrection of the body, be an indignity offered to your Lord, and inconsistent with your profession of faith in his gracious sovereignty? He holdeth the keys of hades, of the unseen world, of heaven and hell; let your eyes be fixed on these keys, and would not every distressful and distracting fear of hell, or concerning being admitted into paradise at death, or concerning the final admission of soul and body into heaven after the resurrection, be an impeachment of his veracity, and goodness, and power? Are you afflicted at the personal sufferings of Christ in the flesh, are you trembling when you behold the daring insults offered to him now; realize this his universal and irresistible dominion, and remember that he shall retain it "till all his enemies are made his footstool." Should Satan and subtle men, availing themselves of the remaining pride of prejudiced reason, trouble you through an apprehension that you are dishonouring God by this view of the salvation of sinners, and of the exaltation of the Saviour, remember that the Spirit hath said, "because he, who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, humbled himself and became obedient to

the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Have you gone along with me, O my hearers? I fear that some of you must say, "This subject is not suited to allay but to awaken fear in us." Hitherto we have not considered this awful and gracious person with deep seriousness, much less with practical hope or fear. His name is familiar to us; but what strangers, what despisers have we been of his personal glories, of his atoning death, of his intercession for sinners, and of his absolute authority over all things in earth, in heaven, and in hell! O, why has he not shut us out of this world, and shut us into the prison-house of the negligent, the unbelieving, the disobedient, which no one could ever again open? Is he not giving us "space to repent?" Will we delay to fall down at his feet in admiration of his power, and righteousness, and grace, not unmixed with terror lest he should but turn the key of death before our work be done?

Have you gone along with me, O my friends? I hope that many intending communicants, who have been trembling at the overpowering splendour of the united glories of their Lord, to whom they are about to make so solemn an approach, are now

convinced and sweetly persuaded that each of these glories, considered by itself in the light of the Spirit, is fitted to meet and calm some distressful fear; and that the whole, after this survey, constitutes the most solid foundation of the peace of God that passeth knowledge, and of holy boldness before the throne of grace. "How fearful, and yet how sweet, my condition at the feet of my Lord and Saviour! I tremble at his immense grandeur; I am ashamed and confounded at his grace! In him I find the all-sufficiency of God to stay my soul upon, and the infinite and wondrous loveliness of Emmanuel to satiate every affection of my heart; in him I find a redemption complete as my guilty conscience could desire; a life that maketh the dead in trespasses and sins to live unto God for ever; a faithfulness immovable as the rock of ages, and sure as the oath of God who cannot lie;" and a power that ruleth over earth, and heaven, and hell, as over the several chambers of his immense abode, of which he holdeth the keys. And in the sacrament of the supper he admitteth me to the feast of love, at which himself presides,—here he treated me as a beloved disciple, and imparted to me a portion of the blessings of the favoured apostle; here "He laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen! and have the keys of hell and of death!" And I am what is still more interesting,—I am yours, and you are mine. Here he

sealed this faithful declaration with the sensible signs of this ordinance, bearing his own image in that attitude which is most precious to believers; and here he conveyed some of the fruits of this wondrous union into my inmost soul, by means "of eating this bread, and drinking this wine, blessed by him." "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" Yet will I fear the name of God in him, and trust that, as the Sun of righteousness, he will shine on me with healing in his beams.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

MEMOIR OF DR JOHN LOVE.

DIED at Anderston, December 17, 1825, in the 69th year of his age, the Rev. Dr JOHN LOVE, Minister of the Parochial Chapel there. He was a man of uncommon talents and acquirements. At ten years old, he was sent from the Grammar School of Paisley, his native place, to the University of Glasgow, where, notwithstanding his youth, he distinguished himself in every department of the regular course, particularly in those of classical literature and mathematics. The influence of these studies was apparent in the accuracy of his reasoning, in the richness of his imagination, and copiousness of his diction, marked by the peculiarities of his own original and vigorous powers. At the time when he acquired reputation in the university, it was the fashion for theological students of eminence to enlist themselves under the banners of clergymen, distinguished by their abilities and literary attainments, who held and taught doctrines very inconsistent with those of the Confession of Faith; by signing which, they had been admitted first probationers, and afterwards ministers of the Church of Scotland. Of some of these ministers, men in other matters highly respectable,

he continued to be a follower; till, alarmed about the foundation of tenets on which his salvation depended, he entered on a painful and lengthened study of the Scriptures with prayer; and, after a severe conflict of mind, was brought to embrace, in faith and love, the truths essential to eternal life, as stated in the standards of our church. His knowledge of theology, theoretical and practical, was profound; his acquaintance with the Word of God minute; his experience of divine truth, on a heart which talent and acquirement had been used to fortify against it, from the commencement of a thorough spiritual change, through all its varied conflicts, up to "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light," was uncommon amongst eminent Christians. If, in the outset of his public life, he pushed some truths beyond scriptural bounds, as has been alleged, his youth and inexperience, his abhorrence of his former creed, and the zeal for newly discovered truth, with warm feelings and a lively imagination, will apologize for it, in the estimation of liberal and enlightened minds. Whether this report, too widely circulated among those least acquainted with Dr Love, and those disappointed by his change of views, to be passed over in silence, be well or ill founded, the author of this paper cannot say: but he can assert, that during about thirty years of frequent and familiar intercourse, he has found the sentiments of his venerable friend on faith and practice, characterized by the "wisdom that cometh from above." Thus God prepared him to be singularly useful in public and in private, to deep thinkers and serious inquirers, especially to those whose imagination resembled his own in solemnity and power, whether involved in the difficulties and distresses of an awakened conscience, or of the Christian life.

The reputation of Mr Love for talents and learning, for having in no common way been brought by God to the

saving acknowledgment of " the mystery of godliness," and for being a preacher of eminence and originality, procured him employment soon after he was licensed. He was assistant first to the Rev. Mr Maxwell of Rutherglen, and afterwards to the Rev. David Turner, of the Old Parish of Greenock; where he attracted much attention, and obtained not a few seals of his ministry, and where he was greatly beloved through the remainder of his life. After Mr Turner's death, he was called to be minister of a Presbyterian chapel in London; and in that situation he remained several years. During his residence there he took an active share in forming the London Missionary Society, and for some years discharged the duties of secretary to it with much acceptance. His zeal for the success of this momentous undertaking, which he bore on his heart to his dying hour, was not exhausted by the many labours of his official situation, difficult and delicate as they were, in the infancy of this splendid enterprise. For the assistance of the first missionaries sent to the South Sea Islands, he published a small volume of addresses to the inhabitants of Otaheite, containing a system of Christian Theology, and characterized by the striking and seemingly opposite peculiarities of his devout and original mind.

In the year 1800, he was chosen minister of the Chapel of Ease at Anderston, in the suburbs of Glasgow; where he continued to fulfil his pastoral duties, public and private, to a select congregation of much attached people, till near the time of his death. Greatly as he was occupied with his official duties, many as were the calls on him for ministerial assistance from the neighbouring city, and numerous as were his engagements with Christian friends, he found time to cherish and manifest his affectionate regard for the general interests of the gospel. Besides being a leading member of a district society for religious purposes, he was secretary,

so long as he was able, to the Glasgow Missionary Society, and the great instrument in the hand of God, of reviving and raising it to its present state of active exertion and prosperity.

Those who knew Dr Love in the pulpit only could not conceive of him as he appeared in the social circle, modestly conspicuous for Christian cheerfulness and Christian courteousness; and, when he chose, contributing in a singularly engaging manner to rational and profitable enjoyment. Much as his society was sought by eminent ministers and Christians of almost every denomination, and much as his ministerial labours were increased with his advancing years, he continued to secure leisure to cultivate the favourite classical studies of his youth, and also to read with delight some of the most celebrated works of the Greek fathers: and though, about the same time, he was not chosen to fill the theological chair of a northern university, when he submitted to a comparative trial, the electors declared him to be "worthy of the highest literary honours;" and a sister university, not long after, conferred on him the highest degree in divinity.

Thus distinguished for talents and literary acquirements, in ministerial duties and in social life, Dr Love was still more distinguished in secret and in private, as a man who lived to God, and "walked with God." Frequently as he worshipped the Supreme Being, he habitually guarded against "drawing nigh to him with his mouth, and honouring him with his lip, while his heart was far from him;" he anxiously sought a sense of the divine presence in his devotions, how short soever; and diligently watched for the tokens of it: he gratefully acknowledged them when perceived, and the least diminution of them he as tenderly lamented: nor, for near thirty years, was he either frequently or long deprived of this his richest enjoyment, even amid sharp trials and depressing infirmities.

Of his outward troubles, and of the faithfulness of God his Saviour in fulfilling to him his gracious promises, in which he had taught him to hope with a confidence not to be shaken by unpromising appearances, not a little might be said. God had blessed him with "a help meet for him," whom he esteemed and loved. She has more than once been wounded with "arrows that are sticking fast in her," and threaten to "drink up her spirit." Instead of being borne down by this trial, as there was room to fear he might have been, he was, by the grace and power of the Lord, his strength and righteousness, to whom he clave with purpose of heart, so sustained and exercised by it, that he continued to reap from it many peaceable fruits of righteousness. In addition to this sharp trial of love and sympathy, he was attacked by a disease that, from its commencement, commonly both weakens the body and impairs the powers of the mind. His outward man was weakened, but his mental faculties remained almost entire, till near the end of his days. When he was approaching the generally assigned boundaries of human life, his disease gained ground, and God did not see meet to counteract its natural tendencies. His faculties lost much of their vigour as his bodily strength decayed; so that he was wholly suspended from pulpit duty for about six months before his death: and yet his inward man was so renewed as to retain faith, cheerfulness, the love of friends, and heavenly hope, and to express them in an affecting look and language of peculiar tenderness. And even when his powers so far declined that his recollection failed him, and the capacity of retaining one idea, or pursuing connected ideas, was lost, his mental wanderings were those of a man long accustomed to walk with God, and wandering on the borders of that heavenly Canaan, into which Jesus was about so soon to conduct him.

No. II.

LETTER—Dr Scott to Mrs John Reid, Paisley.

Greenock, Nov. 12, 1810.

My dear Madam,—The note from your house on Saturday surprised and afflicted me deeply. When we parted, not three weeks ago, I inwardly congratulated myself on the promising vigour of Mr Reid. I have not derived more pleasure from the matter and manner of his public labours, nor from the ease and energy of his private conversation, than I did during my last visit to you. I came away promising myself, and the church, and his friends, prolonged comfort in his improving state of health. How severely do I feel the disappointment! I have wept for my own loss. Mr R. was one whom I valued and loved as a man, a Christian, and a minister. His good sense and gentle manners, his unaffected simplicity and manly integrity, his deep sense of divine things, and profound regard for Jesus, Emmanuel, our Redeemer, and the kindness of his heart, with the warmth of his friendship, rendered him very dear to me. I have wept for your loss. It is the loss of a Christian companion, brother, friend, minister, and husband. Long will the endearing image of himself, and his virtues, and affections, break in upon your most common, your most sacred employments, and bedew them with tears of affectionate recollection. But while we weep for ourselves, it is what we owe to God, the author of this afflicting event, it is what we owe to our departed friend, that should principally engage our minds.

The sovereignty of God will lead to say, "thou hast done this, and I have kept silence." His wisdom that cannot err, his goodness and mercy in Christ Jesus, which I trust we

all have experienced, will teach us to attempt to think and say, "blessed be the name of the Lord." That the gracious Disposer of all events has in this consulted the good, the comfort, the happiness of his servant called away from his earthly labours, we can have no doubt. Were the veil drawn aside, and we permitted to witness the state of our beloved friend, our judgment would tell us, "it is surely far better for him to be with Christ," than in the body, and subject to its frailties, sufferings, and apprehensions. My dear Madam, hard as the saying may seem, it will be our own fault if this separation is not also for our good as well as his. The Lord withholdeth nothing truly good from them that walk uprightly. If we are walking uprightly, this stroke which smarts so severely, this wound which makes the heart bleed, which extinguishes some of the dearest affections, even it is truly good for us,—nay, is the best thing for us, or else our heavenly Father would never have given it. Let us strive to believe this precious yet awful truth, strive to understand it, and strive that the purpose of grace in it may be accomplished in our souls. Let us seek the Spirit of God to lead us to know what sins this event is suited to mortify, —what holy affections to awaken,—what zealous activity should be exercised. Sure it is, when we arrive in the heavenly habitations, when we review all the steps of our pilgrimage, and this very painful passage in it, we will say of the whole way, we will say of this very part of it, "The Lord hath led us forth by the right way." If the spirit of wisdom and revelation be given in measures suited to our time of need (and who can doubt of this when we persevere in the prayer of faith for it), the time will come even in this life, when we shall be enabled to say, in reference to this very event, "It is good for me that I was afflicted." Plain it is, this separation should quicken our preparations for that blessed world into which our lamented friend has entered

before us. This is a great blessing, and contains in it strong consolation. We weep, but "we press forward to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ," and as we press nearer this mark, we press nearer the enjoyment of the society of him who already has obtained possession of it, and waits by the throne of the great Judge to hail the victorious arrival of his friends and consort with his affectionate acclamation. Mrs Scott, Mary, and our suffering Johnny lament your loss, and with me join in affectionate prayers for your support and divine consolation. I ever am,

My dear Madam,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN SCOTT.

No. III.

LETTER—Dr Scott to the Rev. Mr Burns, Paisley.

My dear Sir,—As I am no stranger to what is in the heart of a parent bereaved of dear children, I can think of your deeply afflicting situation, I can dwell on its painful nature and aggravating circumstances, with tender sympathy, and I can present them before Him who is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, with earnest intercession, that he may grant the support, direction, and consolation which are needful; but I cannot speak to you and dear Mrs Burns without difficulty, without the consciousness of inability to address you with all the wisdom, sympathy, and love which your circumstances require. I would weep with you, and feel much relief in thinking that while some of the sweetest and strongest affections of the heart, deeply wounded, call for the indulgence of their sorrows, the Spirit of God, who

says " no chastening seemeth to be joyous, but grievous," authorizes their sorrows. When God who gave your lovely babes, and by them cherished the affections of Christian consorts and parents, called them to his heavenly mansions, he called you to " mourn for an only-begotten son, and to be in bitterness for a first-born." What more indulgence would ye crave than that which your merciful Father freely grants you? Ease your full, your overcharged hearts by your sighs and your groans ; embalm the memory of your beloved children with your tears; and allow me to join in your lamentations, sacred to the memory of these flowers that lately smelt so sweet, and looked so gay, whose mortal part hath mingled with their kindred dust. Bitter as this sorrow is, there is a pleasure, an intoxicating pleasure in it that imperceptibly allures to excess. This is the besetting sin of the bereaved Christian parent; and it is the more powerful and the more plausible in proportion as the heart is affectionate towards the objects of grief, and tender towards God. " Can we ever sufficiently lament the death of children so amiable, or the stroke of that hand which cut them off?" If your lamentations interrupt the duties of the season, or render them lifeless by absorbing the affections, or impair health, they are more than sufficient; and there is no little danger of your heart fainting at the rebuke of the Lord. Against this tendency to excess of meek, submissive sorrow, you may live long to struggle, to watch, and to pray. Long after the first violent bursts of nature, which in cases like yours succeed a stupor that suspends emotion for a time, images will flit before the mind's eye of dear interest, a thousand nameless associations will open the sluices of the melting heart. But you will endeavour to sorrow as those who are afflicted in righteousness and mercy as well as severity, as those who sorrow not without hope. Of the severity the once dear sufferers do not complain. What

were their sufferings compared with the pangs of sympathy, torments of disease in prolonged life, the anguish occasioned by sense of guilt, which they must have experienced in their continued sojourning in this land of shadows and death? And though they had equalled the lengthened excruciating tortures of the martyrs, one moment of the bliss of heaven would have converted them into a theme of thanksgiving. It is the bereaved parents recollecting their emotions as they bend over the bed of languishing and death, thinking on their loss, and feeling the extent of their bereavement, as their eyes follow a shadow that deludes them in all the apartments of their lonely house,—it is they who complain under the severity of the stroke that sometimes threatens to crush them. One of the most effectual remedies in such a case is the sovereignty of God. How afflicted by death in his family, and still more bitterly by the monstrous guilt of several of its members, was David, when he experienced the calming influence of this remedy, and said, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." The absolute property of God in us and ours, made known to us when he gave them, acknowledged by us when we devoted them to him in baptism, and exercised in order to try our sincerity when he calls them away, prepares to contemplate the other sovereign perfections of God manifested in our afflictions. When the sovereignty of God is rightly apprehended, he says to the tempest of our grief, "Peace, be still;" and there "is a great calm." Then, in the sunshine of his own light, we see that righteousness and mercy have presided over this wintry storm, have directed and moderated its force, so that, if a pair of gentle lambkins have perished by its fury, it hath destroyed some noxious weeds, it hath watered the roots of virtues yet under the surface, it hath strengthened the extending grasp of the roots of strongly agitated graces, and prepared the field of wo for

yielding an abundant crop of the fruits of righteousness under the culture of those exercised as God would have them. Whether I consider you as young Christian parents, I must think it is good for you that you bear the yoke in your youth; or whether I consider you, my dear sir, as a minister of the gospel, bearing the cross, and in due time receiving its consolations, I must think you are "afflicted and comforted for the consolation and salvation" of the church of Christ. How astonishing the wisdom, and riches, and grace of God in Christ Jesus, converting the very fruits of sin into a salutary medicine to our own soul,—and rendering our sufferings and restoration the means of promoting the edification of others. You may not be able to relish these things for a time, but I hope and pray that the time may soon arrive when you shall gradually and fully experience both their sanctifying and comforting power.

I shall attend to your request with regard to Miss W. and Mrs M'D. Meanwhile, Mrs S. unites with me in Christian love and sympathy to Mrs B. and yourself; and that you may soon find the Lord is in place of a son and daughter to you, is the fervent prayer of

My dear Sir,

Your affectionate and sympathising friend.

JOHN SCOTT.

Greenock, Feb. 1, 1820.

No. IV.

LETTER—Dr Scott to Miss Balfour, Glasgow.

November 3, 1818.

My dear Madam,—As yet you can admit none but your friends to converse with you; and I deeply feel the value

and the responsibility of this privilege. Fain would I speak comfortably to you; but I am ready to retire before I come in sight, well knowing that my presence will renew your grief, and my hesitating attempt will poorly answer my intention. But to grieve is your duty, and it is your delight: I have been entering into your sorrows, I have been bearing your burden almost constantly, and before God; I have been mingling my griefs and prayers with yours; and why should I be so much afraid of expressing my sympathy to yourself? Were your heart less tender and affectionate than I know it is, I could not wonder at the depth of your distress. Were you not in bitterness of soul, the lamentations of multitudes would be a reproach to you. Were you not to dwell on each particular of your bereavement, and to experience the pang it is fitted to produce, you could not so well know what God had given you, what he has taken away from you, or what he intends to do for you by this loss. You would fail in duty to your Father in heaven, and to your father whom he hath been pleased to call into the presence of his glory. Sovereign and glorious as this call has been, it hath occasioned a loss to you, such as falls to the lot of few children to suffer. This is now your grief; this ought to be, and in God's time will be, your consolation, and the theme of your song of praise. I am sure you will not deny me the right (for I am not ignorant of the object of your grief), or grudge me the mournful pleasure of reviewing with you, who allow me a place in your affectionate regard, the various sums which constituted that rich treasure which you lately possessed on earth, where moth and rust do corrupt. I say with you, and with a portion of your feelings, you have sustained the greatest earthly loss. You have lost a father who was most respectable, and dutiful, affectionate, and kind,—who was your honour and ornament, your guardian and friend; who was your only

remaining parent, the object of a departed mother's dearest affections, and the object of the reverence and love you once entertained for both father and mother. In losing him, you have lost the most precious of God's earthly gifts,—there is a vacancy in your heart which occasions the loss of strength, —which brings on faintness of spirit. Who but God could sustain you in this situation? He hath in righteousness occasioned this void in your heart, and, alas! he sees meet to aggravate the distress of it in many ways. Just when your former wound had become less liable to bleed,—had begun to heal,—when you were becoming more capable of the enjoyment of paternal tenderness,—when the hope of prolonged enjoyment was springing from his improved health,—while his labours of love were such a source of profit and pleasure in the church, and of gratification to himself, he was snatched away in a moment. These circumstances add sickness of heart to the fainting sense of emptiness you experience. You see the arm of the Almighty which hath inflicted the awful stroke, and you have been silent, you have vindicated his righteousness. Round every bed of death, round every tomb is thrown the fearful cloud of divine displeasure against the apostasy of man. The heart is not right with God which is not alive to the evil of sin,—of its own sins in these circumstances. The more tender it is, the more alive to these it will be. What wonder if the child of God, thus situated and affected, should have very obscure and interrupted perceptions of the glory of God in the midst of the cloud? What wonder if the sense of the divine displeasure against sin is more lively than the sense of the divine love to the chastened believer?

Whether you are afflicted in this particular way or not, you are deeply afflicted; perhaps you have been so stunned at first that you could not weep. I hope you have wept, and I know you will often weep. At present a secret, in

time a sensible joy, will with your sense of loss send forth sweet and bitter waters. You are too well acquainted with the Author of your affliction, you are too sincerely the friend of your lamented parent, not to endeavour to estimate the mercies as well as the griefs of this stroke. Surely you are not insensible of the singular privilege of having and so long enjoying such a father. Instead of alleviating, this may aggravate your sorrows for a little. You may reproach yourself for an unsuitable return for this privilege. This is no more than what the most grateful of the children of God have reason to do, for the least, and still more for the greatest, of the mercies of God. But, the blood of Christ having purged their conscience from dead works to serve the living God, they have daily and hourly recourse to it, that, amid the sorrows of manifold infirmities, they may maintain their peace with God, and go on "to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." I am persuaded this is your state and temper. While you humble yourself before God, because you have not been and are not all you desire to be, in reference to your privilege, should you not give thanks for that unspeakable grace which authorized your affectionate father to rejoice over you as his child in the Lord? How gracious is God, who spared him until you were indebted to him for your spiritual as well as your natural birth! Viewed in the light of this grace, this separation appears a correction indeed, but a correction originating from unerring and compassionate love. If it did not originate from love, if it were not administered by love, it would not incessantly inculcate on your willing mind the lessons of heavenly wisdom you are now receiving with more or less immediate profit. Are you not more than ever convinced of the necessity, and more than ever desirous of resting simply on God in Christ Jesus, of conversing with your Father in a heavenly manner, of your affections being less human, less concentrated

on one object, of your former grief being purified, and the graces exercised in it being strengthened, and of your learning to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ? Thus, God is promoting your more perfect conformity to himself, in order to your more perfect communion with him and with his saints. You cannot but attribute the end in view to love, and to what else can you ascribe the means, how painful soever? Had they not been the meetest, his love would have rejected them. Love requires of you as a sacrifice what justice might have demanded as a debt; what was originally a punishment, love converts into the means of the greatest blessings, not to you alone, but to him who endured the stroke of the king of terrors. It was love that spared him till you could sorrow, not as those who have no hope, but as those who are "followers of them, who through faith and patience do now inherit the promises." It was love that spared him for threescore and ten years, when he was in the height of his reputation, usefulness, and acceptableness; and when his lively enjoyment of earthly and spiritual good was singularly seasoned and improved by a holy, feeling recollection of the past, and a sweet, and humble, and elevated hope of the future. It was love that spared him the sharp and humiliating trials of increasing infirmities, of painful distemper or deadening disease, of interrupted enjoyment, and suspended ministerial labours. And it was love that translated him from his labours of love, his good fight of faith, to his crown of righteousness. When shall he be more sensibly missed in an assembly on earth than he was last Lord's day, where for thirty-nine years he had dispensed the word and bread of life, where his face shone with the lustre of communion with God, and his words burned as sacred fire in the hearts of many hearers? But was it not love that produced even there a more awful solemnity, a more affecting sense of responsibility, a more

awakened concern to improve opportunities of communion which may soon close, a more immediate dependence on the High Priest of salvation than on his ministering servants so liable to be removed, a more lively and affecting anticipation of the marriage-supper of the Lamb, at which their lamented pastor, amid the happy circle of his spiritual children in heaven, sits under the immediate smiles of unveiled glory; and a more spiritual communion with their pastor than when they enjoyed his bodily presence and favoured ministrations? And what but divine love fixes the affectionate regard of many Christians on you, and mingles yours with their dearest interests before the throne of grace,—renders you a peculiar object of Christ's fraternal sympathy, and of God's paternal care and tenderness?

Such is the cup put into your hands by your heavenly Father. It has many bitter ingredients, but it also contains not a few of heavenly sweetness. It is graciously intended, it is skilfully compounded, it is tenderly administered, and the great Physician will visit you every morning, and try you every moment, with a view to ensure its success. How delicious are the sweetnesses of it, and its most pungent bitters shall work together for good. Is not your eye on your Saviour, who drank off the cup of wrath, that he might put into your hand this salutary sweetened cup? Are you not imbibing more of his believing and submissive Spirit, and desirous of adopting his language, "the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" I have still much to say to yourself and to your fellow-mourners in the family, who share in my affectionate sympathy and prayers. I have much to say of my private sorrows, and joys, and mortifications connected with the cause of your afflictions; but I have been so long deterred from beginning to write, I have been so often interrupted since I began, and I have written so much, considering your state

of health and mind, that I think it right to commit you to the consolation of Israel. He needeth not that any one should tell him what is in your heart, he is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and he will comfort you with his strong consolations. I ever am,

My dear Madam,

Your obliged and affectionate

friend and servant,

JOHN SCOTT.

Greenock, Nov. 5, 1818.

May the time soon come when the following extract will afford you more pleasure and profit than it yields me. "It may be, we have got their pictures drawn by some skilful hand, and their images hang around us in their best likeness, as tender memorials of what we once enjoyed, to give us now and then a melancholy delight, and awaken in us the pleasing sadness of love. These we call our most precious pieces of furniture, and our hearts rate them at an uncommon price. But it would be much richer furniture for our souls to have the best likenesses of our pious predecessors and kindred copied out there. Let us now and then reflect what were their peculiar virtues, and the remarkable graces that adorned them; and if we could imagine the spirit of each of them to look down upon us through those eyes which the pencil has so well imitated, and to speak through those lips, each of them would say in the language of the softest and most sacred affection, "Be ye followers of me, as dear children, so far as I was a follower of Christ." —Watt's Sermon, "The death of kindred improved."

No. V.

LETTER—Rev. Dr Scott to ——

Greenock, April 22, 1826.

I HAVE wept with and for my dear mourner, and I have often prayed for her and those who most deeply share her sorrows; but till now I wanted resolution to write to her on a subject so afflicting.—But the sight of your letter to Mrs S—— as I was just going to begin to write, and your account of God's goodness in the state of your health and of your mind, together with that of your fellow-mourners, while they brought tears into my eyes, and filled my mouth with thanksgivings, encouraged me to attempt to write. This afflicting loss you must lament to the end of life, and occasionally with bitterness of heart; but never I hope and pray to excess, or with hard thoughts of him who hath caused it. What would your experience have been had God thus afflicted you before you knew him in Christ Jesus as your covenant God, "the God of all grace and consolation," and who maketh "all things work together for good" to them who love him, who are the called according to his purpose? In contemplating the Author of your sorrows, you behold the awful splendour of his absolute sovereignty blended with the sweet softening rays of his righteousness and love. You know with what unwillingness he hath afflicted and grieved you, even when consulting the interests of his own glory, and executing the everlasting purpose of his wisdom, and grace, and rectitude. With regard to yourself and your dear relatives who have laid hold on Jesus for "strength and righteousness," ye are striving to glorify the faithfulness of your gracious God by believing in opposition

to the natural movements of your affections, and the occasional suggestions of unbelief, that even this afflicting event is "mercy and truth to yourselves." Who hath in sovereignty taken away this amiable and hopeful brother but he who in sovereignty gave him and all the pleasures included in the precious gift, and warned that he was lent but for a day, and to be resumed when he saw it meet? Who hath cut him off in the time, and place, and manner in which he hath been removed but He "who spared not his own son, but delivered him up to the accursed death of the cross" in the time, and place, and manner, and by the hands appointed, "for you all" then viewed by him as his enemies? Who is he that sits over this fiery furnace, superintending the important process of refining you as gold, and will bring you forth as fine gold unto glory, and honour, and praise in the day of the Lord? Is it not he who redeemed you by his blood, and created you anew by his spirit, who sympathizes with every pang that rends your hearts, and who will not subject you to one pain more than the "need be" requires? What then is all this for but a trial of your faith, which is much more precious than that of "gold that perisheth"—of that faith you professed when you first in truth committed yourself to Christ—that faith you repeated in every prayer—that faith you have delighted to profess over the symbols of Christ's body broken and his blood shed? Though this faith be of the operation of the Holy Spirit, though the Lord hath increased it in strength, still it may, by sharp trials, be weakened and shaken. Should such a time arrive, remember your Lord's promise, believe it, apply for the fulfilment of it in your own experience,—"I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." It has always given me pleasure that God, from the time he condescended to become your spiritual instructor, taught you the connexion between privilege and duty, promise fulfilled and

the use of means—for want of which knowledge much injustice and dishonour are done to the gospel, and much injury to immortal souls. I am, therefore, confident that you will seek to prevent the failure of your faith, and to promote the right and vigorous exercise of it, by endeavouring to enlighten, and strengthen, and quicken it by prayer, meditation, searching the Scriptures, and reading scriptural works suited to your circumstances, while you rely simply on the promised grace of Christ both for the due use of these means and for a never-failing faith, the end of them. As I think Flavel's Token, &c. meets almost all the varied movements of the afflicted mind and heart with uncommon tenderness and scriptural power, you can easily conceive the satisfaction I feel in thinking of you and your afflicted relatives engaged in the agreeable perusal of it; that you will now better understand it and feel its truth and consolatory power, while you acquire a more intimate acquaintance with your own hearts, and the riches of divine grace in furnishing suitable and effectual remedies for their infinitely varied distempers, is my firm belief.—But think not, I beseech you, that all this, or even much of this is to be experienced at once; "for after you have done the will of God" in the use of means, "ye have need of patience" to wait like the husbandman for the harvest of promise fulfilled—"the peaceable fruits of righteousness." Mrs Scott begs to thank you for your letter, particularly as she did not expect you to write. All unite in continued prayer and sympathy with you and all your mourners. I ever am,

With affectionate regard
and tenderest sympathy,
very truly yours,
JOHN SCOTT.

No. VI.

LETTER—Dr Scott to Mrs Douglas, Stewarton.

Greenock, April 21, 1825.

My dear Madam,—The report of the death of your affectionate husband, and my long-approved friend and brother, which reached me at Glasgow, did not surprise me, as I had been hearing from time to time of his declining state of health; but it did afflict me. His death is no common loss to any of his friends; to me it is an uncommon one, and not to be supplied. Ordained within a few weeks of each other, mutual assistants from the commencement of our ministry, united in principle and friendship that suffered no interruption, and increased with experience for near thirty-two years, we could not be separated without the survivor feeling as if no small part of himself were cut off. I shall miss him, and mourn my loss in the study, the parlour, and the pulpit, especially on these endearing occasions when we met to enjoy the pleasures of Christian society and friendship, and unite in celebrating the wonders of redeeming love. Never did I meet with him but with kindness, never part with him but with grateful recollections, never was he forgotten in my daily prayers for my friends in the ministry, and of late was he always remembered among the useful pastors whose lives I desired might be spared. His removal occasions a sorrowful blank in my affections, in my devotions, and among my assistants. The Lord hath done it; I bless his name for the sweetness shed abroad in this sorrow, by the full and delightful persuasion that he is now in a state which more than compensates all his toils, and sufferings, and sorrow of parting with his beloved family, and his endeared flock

and friends. While I and my people remember with mournful pleasure labours no more to be renewed, we cannot but realize him as reaping the fruits of these and all his other acceptable works of faith, and hope that many yet unanswered prayers of his for us will receive the answer of peace in our time of need; and though separated, as to the body, we still have communion in the Spirit. Indeed, I desire to receive this removal, in which I have so deep an interest, as a loud call to me, "Be thou also ready, for the Son of man cometh at an hour thou thinkest not." And I earnestly desire and pray that, by the grace of God, I may be "a follower of him who now, through faith and patience, inheriteth the promises." Much as I have reason to lament my loss, yet mine is not to be compared with that which you and your dear family have sustained. I desire to sympathize with you, lamenting the removal of an affectionate husband, endeared by the sweet and trying experience of many years, of a dutiful father, a faithful and zealous pastor, and to all a Christian friend, exemplary in doing, in enjoying, and in suffering. His excellent character in all these relations, produeed by the grace of God through faith in his beloved Master, must just now embitter his loss; in God's time, if not at present, it will sweeten and purify your sorrows, and mingle lively thanksgivings with your lively lamentations. The more excellent he was, the more will you miss him; but the more excellent he was, the more "meet was he for the inheritance of the saints in light," and the more fitted to live in the affectionate remembrance of his beloved family. It will be impossible for you to escape those meltings of heart, which a thousand recollections of one whose image is interwoven with all your thoughts, with the very being of your mind, and is impressed on every object around you, will from time to time produce. But this image had on it the image of the living God, qualifying to enjoy communion

with God while here, and prepared to enter into his glory hereafter. If he is not here, he is with his Lord, who came and received him to himself, and conducted him into the mansions of his Father's house, that where the Master is, there the servant may be also. Whatever may be the feelings of your affectionate heart, I am sure your enlightened practical judgment would not recall him for a mere earthly and imperfect gratification of your own, to the state of weakness, and suspension of his official duties, and suffering, from which his gracious Lord saw meet to release him. I am sure your love for him, gradually rising above all selfishness, will not grudge him the sight and enjoyment of the unveiled glory of him, whom his soul loveth above all in heaven and in earth—the equality with angels. Joy must mingle with your sorrow, and praise with your lamentations. What higher gratification to sanctified affection or sacred ambition than to be with him in glory? What path will lead you all more certainly thither than the one so well known to you —the one he was enabled to enter on, and to the last to persevere in—even "the way, the truth, and the life?" And will not your affectionate recollection of what he was, how he prayed and laboured to lead you all into the land of uprightness, and of where he now is, and how employed, draw you towards Jesus in glory by the cords of love? All human unions are liable to be dissolved, as you have painfully experienced in one of the most intimate and endearing; but there was a union you, my dear Madam, enjoy which shall never be dissolved, which shall sanctify all other connexions while they subsist and when they are dissolved. Your union with Christ, and, through him, with God, will console you in your present and heaviest of earthly losses—and in all your future sorrows, and in death itself, which puts an end to the connexions of time, it will bring you into an

heavenly intimacy with your Lord, and with him whom you loved tenderly and now weep for bitterly. Your earthly and spiritual charge of your family becomes heavier far, and cannot but occasion parental anxiety. Instead of weakening your heart or your hands, I trust that God, on whom you cast all your cares, will render this the means of rousing to salutary watchfulness, exertion, and prayer; and that, in the experience of yourself and them, you will know him to be "the Judge of the widow, and the Father of the fatherless." In my daily prayers for those "mourning over painful bereavements" you and your family find a daily place. I would have written Mr James did I not think that he must have left you, and that you would convey my apology to him. I was detained in Glasgow from Saturday the 9th to Saturday afternoon the 16th. When I came home that evening I found his melancholy kind letter. An engagement of some weeks' standing obliged me to cross the water on Monday, and remain till Tuesday evening; and I had public worship yesterday. You will perceive, I hope, that it was out of my power to have been with you on Monday, which I certainly would have been had circumstances permitted; and so hurried have I been ever since I came home, that I could not find leisure to write you till now, which I have done amid a press of business, and amid many interruptions. Offer my kindest acknowledgments to Mr James for his letter, so affectionate and dutiful to the memory of his dear father, and so obliging and friendly to myself. Mrs Scott has been confined for the most part through the winter, but is better. The young people are well. Alexander and Margaret are at Glasgow. When convenient a note from you would oblige us greatly. Mrs Scott unites with me in affectionate sympathy and regards to you and all the members of your family absent or present,

and in earnest intercessions for all that light, support, and consolation suited to promote your true happiness and the glory of God's grace in Christ Jesus. I am, and ever am,

My dear Madam,
your affectionate friend,
JOHN SCOTT.

No. VII.

LETTER—Dr Scott to the Rev. Mr Smith, Lochwinnoch.

Ardrossan, Oct. 3, 1829.

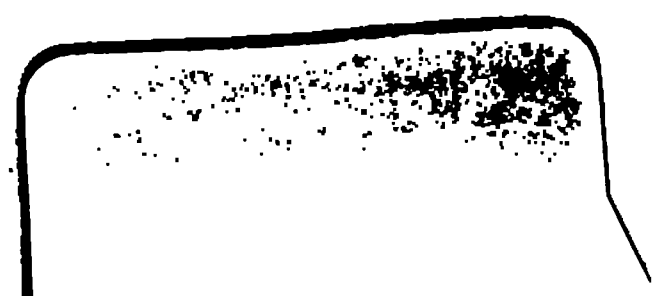
My dear Sir,—Your affectionate letters are always a cordial to me. Fain would I trace the love shown me by the friends of Jesus up to the incomprehensible and inexhaustible and sovereign love of Jesus flowing over on them, and through them on me, to revive me in this time of humiliation for privileges withdrawn, and labours suspended, it may be, terminated. Yet I trust, while I pray, my affliction, mingled with many undeserved mercies, may be overruled for perfecting what is lacking in my faith and holiness, for rousing those of my people whom I was not enabled to awaken, doubling the diligence of those whom the Lord hath called, and quickening the affections and labours of my dear friends in the ministry. These hopes diminish the weight of my burden, and sweeten the cup my heavenly Father hath given me to drink. It always was a pleasure, and should have been more of a benefit to me to enjoy the privileges, public and private, of the communion season at Lochwinnoch. I loved the society, the ordinances, and the

spirit in which they were administered, and the grace which accompanied them. The remembrance calls for thanksgivings for God's goodness, for mercy to pardon sins and shortcomings, and for grace to help in time of need; in all which I beg you will unite with me. The kindness of Mrs Smith and you will miss me; but in power and suitableness of the ministration of word and sacrament, I cannot be missed with your assistants able and fervent in spirit, to whom I beg to be remembered in brotherly love. To Dr Barr I am under many obligations which I have not an opportunity of yet acknowledging. All the aid I can yield the church is that of my poor prayers, which though feeble are frequent, almost continual. That they will be more particular for your portion of the vineyard, and for yourself and fellow-labourers during this solemnity, you will believe; on all the days of it may the glory of the Lord fill, and make you all joyful in, his house of prayer. That you may feel the power and sweetness of divine truth, and declare it with much comfort and power from on high, is my prayer and hope. Mrs Scott and Margaret have been much worse, but through the mercy of God are much better. I continue as you saw me, weak, but remembered of God in compassion. Mrs Scott and Margaret unite with me in love to Mrs Smith and you, and in best wishes for the children. This is a long letter for me, but short for all the kind things I am inclined to say. I ever am,

My dear sir,

very affectionately yours,

JOHN SCOTT.

THE END.

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